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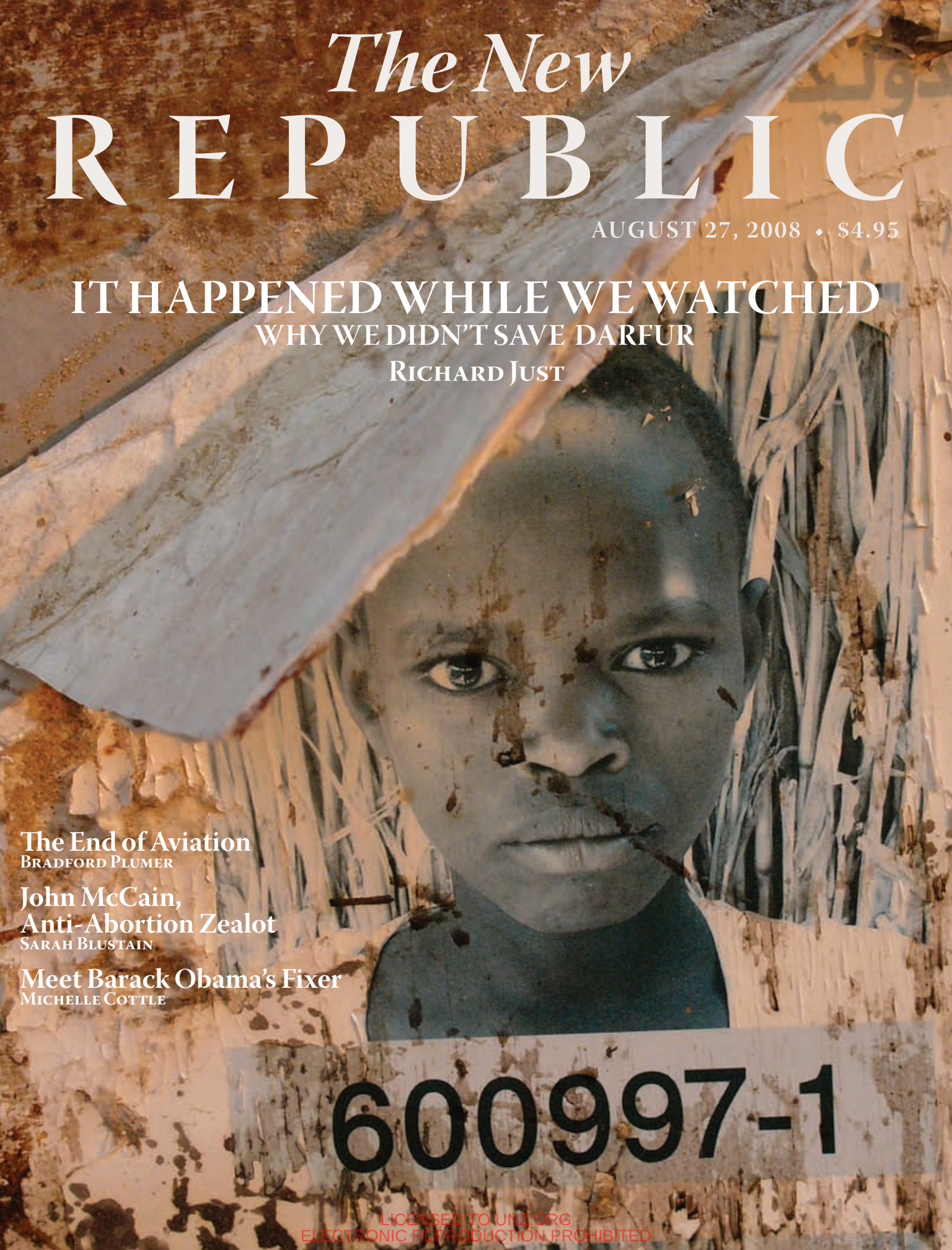
IT HAPPENED WHILE WE WATCHED

WHY WE DIDN'T SAVE DARFUR

RICHARD JUST



The End of Aviation
BRADFORD PLUMER

John McCain, Anti-Abortion Zealot
SARAH BLUSTAIN

Meet Barack Obama's Fixer
MICHELLE COTTLE

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 239 WASHINGTON, AUGUST 27, 2008 NUMBER 4,842

Drilling Down

Representative John Shadegg was very proud of his Republican colleagues in the House. They had, after all, wrestled down rising gas prices. "The market is responding to the fact that we are here talking," he told reporters. And, even if he wasn't right about the technical workings of the petroleum market—which, strangely enough, responded to a decrease in consumer demand and not the posturing of conservative congressmen—he had a point: By showing up and making their case for drilling for oil, Republicans were indeed moving the needle.

From the opinion polls, you could see how the GOP has persuaded the public of the wisdom of its fetish for populating the U.S. coastline with oil rigs. According to a CNN/Opinion Research Survey, nearly three-quarters of Americans like the idea of offshore drilling. And, most dishearteningly, the public apparently believes the least plausible piece of Republican spin—that such drilling, even if it won't yield oil for many years, will lower prices in the near term. Then there is the Republican domination of the energy debate in the presidential contest. Under pressure from McCain, Barack Obama felt obliged to temper his long-standing opposition to drilling. On one of his stronger issues, Obama was suddenly on the defensive.

That Republicans have, against the odds, won the first round of this debate is a remarkable feat. This initial triumph owes as much to Democratic ineptitude as it does to GOP savvy. It speaks to the fact that Democrats have been unable to rhetorically defend their environmental policy as sound energy policy. If Democrats can't figure out how to make their case for alternative energy and conservation, they will have squandered an historic opportunity—and find themselves buried in a deep political hole.

To recount how things went so badly: The Democrats' initial instinct was to revert to populism. They began wailing about the rapacity of "speculators." "Without regard for anything but their own profits, we've seen that—it seems the traders are the ones bidding up the prices," Senator Harry Reid crowed last month. "They keep buying futures to inflate the price, and they keep making more and more money." There was, however, a problem with this case: It simply wasn't true. Speculators weren't responsible for rising prices at the pump. And, beyond that, the public simply didn't believe this diagnosis. So the Democrats made their first adjustment. They began to broaden their populist diatribe and started attacking the likes of Exxon and the rest of the big oil companies. But, by that point, they were already losing the argument.

Faced with grim polling numbers, Democrats made their second adjustment. They began to compromise with the drilling plans that they had just attacked. After Obama shifted his stance on drilling, Nancy Pelosi encouraged vulnerable Democratic congressmen up for reelection to do the same, according to House aides. This may help salve their political woes in the short-term, but it is a position that will vitiate their arguments over the long haul. To ultimately prevail politically, not to mention drive down energy costs and forestall climate change, Democrats will have to argue that the only true path to "energy independence" is independence from oil itself. That is, however much we may rely on our own oil sources, the market for oil is global, not national, and the growing thirst for oil from places like China and India won't be diminishing any time soon. So drilling may provide a few more U.S. barrels of oil, but this increase in supply will be minuscule compared to the cresting demand. Instead of generating a true solution to the coming crisis, the Republican energy plan further shackles Americans to the whims of the global oil market.

The inability of Democrats to make this critique against drilling is troubling. Yes, Obama mentioned the importance of tire pressure gauges. And he even did a terrific job fending off McCain's attempt to portray these gauges as the heirs to Jimmy Carter's cardigan. "It's like these guys take pride in being ignorant," Obama told Ohio voters in a town hall meeting. (Indeed, he could have gone further and pointed out that no less a red-blooded organization than NASCAR

David Cowles

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has urged drivers to properly inflate their tires.)

But tire gauges are a very small part of the case that Democrats need to make. They need to argue that energy efficiency is the cheapest, most effective avenue for lowering energy prices in a hurry. That it's a means of salvaging our current lifestyle, not remaking it. In other words, Democrats need to better argue that environmentalism is the solution to high energy costs.

There's more at stake in these arguments than presidential polls. If Democrats continue to cede ground on issues like drilling, they will have lost the larger debate over our society's long-term dependence on petroleum.

Radical Cheek

EVEN BEFORE the opening ceremonies, the Olympics got off to a bad start for the United States: The U.S. women's soccer team, ranked number one in the world, looked uninspired in an upset loss to Norway. At least the American soccer players were allowed to enter China, though. The same cannot be said of Joey Cheek, the American speed-skating gold medalist who planned on attending the Olympics as a spectator and co-founder of Team Darfur, an international coalition of athletes that promotes awareness of the Darfur genocide. The day before he was set to leave for Beijing, Cheek was notified by Chinese authorities that his visa had been revoked.

The snubbing of Cheek is part of a predictable pattern. At least three other members of Team Darfur, including 2004 synchronized swimming bronze medalist Kendra Zanotto, have also had their visas revoked. Meanwhile, two American and two British citizens were arrested and deported for unfurling a pro-Tibet banner outside the Olympic stadium.

STAN GROSSFELD/BOSTON GLOBE/LANDOV

If the Chinese government insists on preventing athletes, spectators, and activists from making political statements during the Olympics, it is incumbent upon those competing in the games to respond appropriately. We're pleased to observe that some are already distinguishing themselves in this regard. Forty Olympic athletes have signed an open letter to President Hu Jintao urging China to improve its human rights record, and German fencer Imke Duplitzer, a silver medalist four years ago, announced she would skip the opening ceremonies in protest. Also impressive was the decision by the American delegation to have runner Lopez Lomong carry the U.S. flag at the opening ceremonies. Lomong, a member of Team Darfur, is a Sudanese native who was taken from his parents by rebels at the age of six, grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya, was adopted by a family in upstate New York, and became an American citizen last July after attending Northern Arizona University.

These are the kinds of actions we envisioned when we called upon athletes to make their voices heard during the Olympics ("Gold Meddle," October 22, 2007), and we hope there will be many more—and more vocal—political statements made by athletes during the course of the games. It would also be nice if the International Olympic Committee and American Olympic officials could see fit to defend the free-speech rights of their athletes. "He's not part of our delegation," U.S. Olympic Committee CEO James Scherr said in response to Cheek's visa revocation, which he described as being "between the [Chinese] government and Joey as a private citizen." On the contrary, with the eyes of the world focused on Beijing, it's a matter of the utmost public significance whether the Chinese government succeeds in intimidating would-be protesters into silence. ◆

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Alexandra Paul / actress © Reporters Without Borders

This week, Reporters Without Borders is offering a free «Beijing 2008» T-shirt to the 50 first readers who send an email to rwb_dc2@rsf.org

China has not kept the promises they made in the run up to the Olympic Games. The human rights situation still has to be improved. We must call for the release of the journalists and prisoners of conscience who are currently in jail.

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Bush 36,000

The invisible hand slaps conservatives again.

JONATHAN CHAIT

TRB
From Washington

I've recently been perusing a copy of *The Bush Boom: How a 'Misunderestimated' President Fixed Our Broken Economy*, by right-wing commentator and *National Review* contributor Jerry Bowyer. Ah, yes, the Bush Boom. It's a bygone era, a time of hope, like the Kennedy years. Also like Camelot, the Bush Boom was tragically cut short—by, um, the Bush recession. Actually, the second Bush recession, to be precise.

Now, I don't really think it's fair to blame a president for having the economy tank on his watch. But that's just the point. For several years—the "Bush Boom" years—Republicans were essentially arguing that the mere fact that the economy was expanding should be taken as proof that Bush's economic policies succeeded.

President Bush would routinely announce facts such as (from a speech last year), "During the time when we cut taxes to today, our economy has grown by more than $1.9 trillion." He would mock his critics and declare, "events have proven them wrong."

The whole trick here was to start at the bottom point of the economic cycle and assume that any subsequent improvement was the result of his policies. Of course, this is a ludicrously forgiving measure. Over time, the economy tends to grow, and it also goes through cycles. To point out that we're better off at the peak of a cycle than at the trough is something that could be said of *any* economic cycle. Bush was claiming his miracle fertilizer succeeded because his plants were taller at the end of the summer than at the beginning of spring.

So the justification for Bush's economic policies was that the economy was no longer in recession. Now they can't even claim *that* any more. It's as if Bush's plants suddenly wilted in August.

I'd never go as far as conservatives do in attributing economic growth to tax rates. But that's the right's game, so let's see how the Bush Boom measures up, now that it's gone to macroeconomic heaven. A recent paper by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) compares the Bush Boom to the ten previous periods of economic expansion since 1949. If you measure it from the peak of the previous business cycle, the Bush Boom ranks eighth out of the last ten expansions. If you measure it from the trough of the recession, Bush's preferred gauge, it ranks dead last.

And the meager growth that did occur accrued almost entirely to the rich. One of the few categories where the Bush Boom really did boom was corporate profits, which rank, depending on which measure you use, second or fourth. But wage and salary growth ranks last out of the ten previous expansions. Median family income actually *declined*. As the EPI paper notes, "this marks the first time this has happened since World War II in a business cycle lasting anywhere near as long as the most recent cycle." So, from the standpoint of making most people better off—which, of course, is the whole point of economic growth—the Bush Boom was a staggering catastrophe.

The Bush Boom was accompanied by frantic attempts to convince Americans that things were actually going better than they thought. One comical subgenre of Republican argumentation was to explain away polls showing persistent economic pessimism as a kind of false consciousness. If polls showed that people thought the economy was bad, it wasn't because their incomes hadn't risen—it must be the fault of the liberal media playing up bad news and ignoring the glories of the Boom. Ubiquitous right-wing economic commentator Larry Kudlow even coined a catchphrase to describe the press's suppression of the Bush Boom: "The greatest story never told."

When Phil Gramm recently remarked that we were becoming "a nation of whiners," he gave voice to what had become the standard Republican view. What's the matter with you people? Can't you see that Phil Gramm and everybody he knows are making out like bandits?

Now that the Boom has ended, the new GOP line is to acknowledge the bad times but proceed on cheerfully as if all conservative economic precepts have been borne out. Bush recently declared, "the economy is not doing as well as we'd like to do—like it to do today, but there's no question that the tax cuts provided economic vitality." John McCain asserted, "Raising taxes in a bad economy is about the worst thing you could do because it will kill even more jobs when what we need are policies that create jobs." (Last year, remember, you couldn't raise taxes on the rich because the economy was growing, which proved the tax cuts worked.)

If you're keeping score at home, this makes two consecutive economic cycles that have annihilated the premises of right-wing economics. When Bill Clinton raised the top tax rate in 1993, conservatives unanimously predicted it would destroy the economy. When Bush cut the top tax rate, conservatives insisted it would produce (in fact, already had produced) widespread prosperity.

Of course, you could say that this was all horrible luck for the Republicans, and tax rates had little effect either way. But that would also undercut the right's case. The initial effect of tax cuts for the rich is to increase public debt and income inequality. Conservatives justify these consequences by pointing to the alleged second-order effects of tax cuts—promoting stronger incentives and higher growth. But, if the second-order effects are so tiny they get washed out by larger economic factors—and the evidence overwhelmingly suggests they are—why should we pay the price for them?

When the macroeconomic rationale for upper-bracket tax cuts is gone, you're left with nothing but a naked upward-redistribution scheme. Thus conservatives continue to cling to their cherished ideas. A recent *Wall Street Journal* editorial argued that, if the economy was sinking, it must be in part because markets fear the prospect of Barack Obama winning and raising taxes. (You thought Obama was up because the economy was bad? Turns out you had it backward.)

Combing through the Bush economic triumphalism literature, I sought in vain for some measure of self-awareness. The closest I came was this unwittingly prescient remark by Bowyer in *The Bush Boom*: "What, in particular, of our economic and financial pundits? When they make predictions that do not come to pass, they seem to suffer no ill consequences." ◆

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Blackwater Blues

Hard times for mercenaries in Iraq.

It was getting toward dusk on the Baghdad Airport road, and, as we passed through the last airport checkpoint and headed for the Green Zone, I stared nervously out the window of our armored Toyota Land Cruiser. On one of my past trips to Baghdad, in May 2005, the ten-mile airport road, known by the U.S. military as "Route Irish," was still an infamous symbol of the country's instability. Hundreds of people had been killed or injured on it. I'd been trussed up in Kevlar, warned to keep my head below the window, and jammed into the back seat with a large box of Kwik-Klot blood coagulant. "Anything happens, Hussein will push you down to the floor," my British escort had told me, as the driver careened down the road at Mad Max speed. "Don't get up until we tell you to." But this time, my three escorts, all British ex-soldiers, hadn't even bothered to give me a vest, and we cruised at a leisurely pace along a road that seemed as normal as Interstate 95. "I can't even remember the last time the highway was attacked," said one of my protectors, a burly, tattooed Glaswegian. "But don't publicize that fact. We might be out of a job."

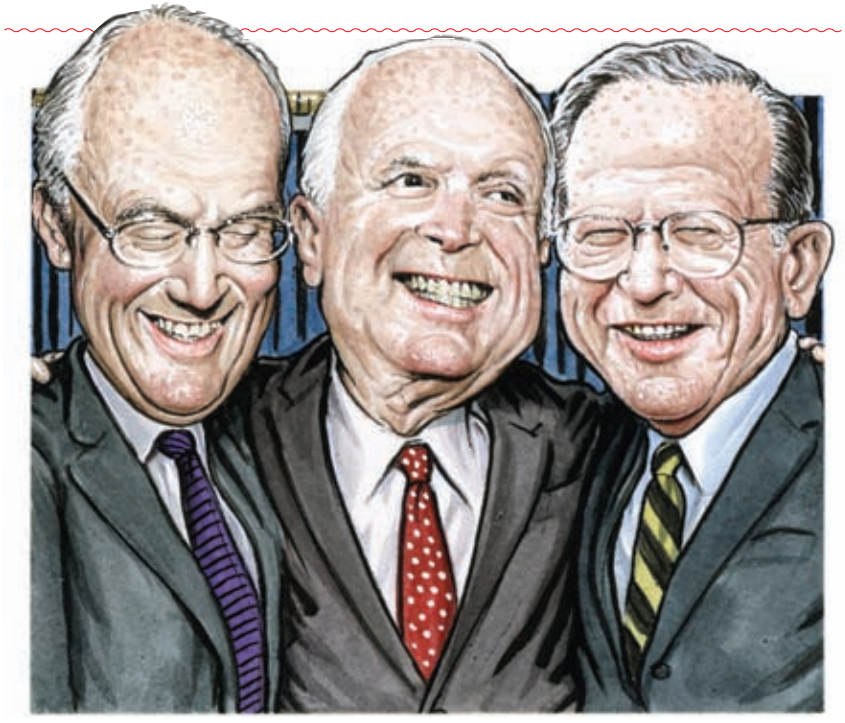
For a correspondent returning to Baghdad after a two-year absence, the changes on the ground are striking. It's not just the absence of the horrific soundtrack of daily car-bomb blasts that accompanied my last visit, or the fact that I could sit with my Iraqi staff for a 90-minute lunch in the popular Al Lathiqiya restaurant in Arasat Al Hindiya without fear of abduction. Improvements in security—largely the result of both the "surge" and the alliance between U.S. forces and some former Sunni insurgents in the battle against Al Qaeda in Iraq—have generated a collective psychic relief. There is a sense in Baghdad, for the first time since early 2004, that stability is an attainable goal.

But the transformation has left one group decidedly unhappy: Western security contractors. "Nobody is willing to pay the kind of money they once did," grumbles a former British soldier who ran security for a major U.S. media organization in Baghdad but returned home to London last spring because his contract wasn't renewed. "The opportunities have been drying up for months."

At their peak, in 2006, there were more than 40,000 foreign security contractors working in Iraq, or about one for every three American soldiers. The twice-daily Royal Jordanian Airlines flights into Baghdad were packed with a gallery of mercenaries from around the world: Nepalese ex-Gurkhas, former French Legionnaires, hardened warriors of South Africa's apartheid regime, Australian bush rangers, American ex–Green Berets, and British SAS officers, all drawn by the promise of $15,000-per-month salaries, generous perks (stays en route at top hotels in Amman), and a Rambo culture that let them live out their most swashbuckling military fantasies. Tearing through the streets of Baghdad in their armored Toyota Land Cruisers with the barrels of their semiautomatic weapons pointed menacingly out the windows, the mercs basked in the knowledge that they were guaranteed immunity from prosecution in Iraqi courts.

Meanwhile, worsening suicide bombings and roadside-bomb attacks kept the prices charged by the mercenaries soaring: In February 2007, for example, the security company AKE quoted me a one-way fare of $3,700 for the drive from Baghdad Airport to the Green Zone.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH *With* **DREW FRIEDMAN**



Big tent, wide stance.

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The service included two armored cars, one for client and one for spotters, along with two armed expatriates and six Iraqis. Rides to the airport weren't the only big payday. One private security firm, Custer Battles, scored a $16.5 million Coalition Provisional Authority contract to guard Baghdad International Airport, then allegedly submitted phony invoices to the CPA for forklifts, trucks, and other equipment, overcharging by at least $6.5 million, according to two former employees who brought a suit against the company.

But, with the success of last year's surge, the Mahdi Army's cease-fire, the routing of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the growing assertiveness of the Iraqi government, all this began to change. Early last year, the security firm hired by the British Embassy cut its daily rate for Western contractors from $700 to $350 per day, and other groups employed by diplomats and Western media have followed suit. Moreover, many organizations have turned to a growing pool of well-trained Iraqis. "They can get them for about $1,000 a month, while the average salary is still about $600 per day per person for a Westerner," the former British soldier tells me. Probably the most striking sign of the new economy are the nose-diving prices for the airport road highway run. U.S. military sweeps through the insurgent-filled neighborhoods around the airport, intensified patrols by the Iraqi army, and fencing of the most dangerous stretches have caused the violence on the once-deadly highway to drop precipitously: At the height of the violence, in April 2005, there were dozens of attacks; now months go by without a single incident. Though a few stubborn companies like AKE have refused to lower their prices, most companies have cut their price to between $1,000 and $2,000. Edinburgh International, based in Baghdad's Green Zone, does the shuttle for a mere $875.

It's not only prices that have taken a beating. The culture of lawlessness—or, in the mercs' eyes, their freedom to operate—has been seriously curtailed. Last September, Blackwater agents sprayed a traffic circle in Baghdad's Mansour neighborhood with gunfire, killing 17 civilians; American officials whisked the contractors, who were immune to prosecution in Iraq, out of the country. (In April 2008, the United States renewed its contract with Blackwater, despite an FBI probe into excessive force by its gunmen.) "[T]hings got more difficult for the rest of us [after that]," one security man told Lara Marlowe of the *Irish Times* in May. "We call it Blackwater fallout. Before, we could fire on a vehicle if it sidled up to us. Now we're forbidden from shooting before they open fire." This month, during negotiations for a new security agreement with the Iraqi government, the United States reportedly agreed to lift immunity for foreign security contractors, making them subject to prosecution under Iraqi law.

The mercenaries' reputation for shooting first and asking questions later has caused a backlash that goes far beyond Iraq. As many as 4,000 South Africans are now working in Iraq as private security consultants. The majority served as policemen and soldiers under white-minority rule, and the presence of so many combat-hardened apartheid warriors has stirred concern within the African National Congress–led government about the image the country is projecting overseas. Last year, South Africa's deputy minister of foreign affairs, Aziz Pahad, called the employment of so many South African security forces in Iraq "of deep concern to the government." And, in November 2007, President Thabo Mbeki signed the Prohibition of Mercenary Activities Act, which tightens restrictions on South Africans working as mercenaries or private security contractors in a foreign country.

"The law hasn't been tested yet, but we're all anxious," I was told by Hennie, a towering, heavily muscled security guard from Durbanville, an Afrikaans-speaking suburb of Cape Town, as we stood together in the 110-degree heat outside Baghdad's Ministry of the Interior last month. Hennie fought in Namibia and Angola and, two years ago, came to Baghdad as an employee of Reed, a Virginia-based security firm. Now his employment contract is running out, and he's worried about being arrested if he returns home. "Thousands of us weren't brought up to do anything but this work," Hennie said, sweating profusely in his heavy flak jacket.

Thankfully for the mercenaries (if not for the rest of the world), moving by road anywhere outside Baghdad remains a risky business. Westerners traveling on the highway between, for instance, Baghdad and Salahaddin Province north of the capital stand a good chance of being abducted by Sunni insurgents. "There are so many small pockets where you can't operate around the country," the London-based security consultant tells me. "You could fall victim to a roadside hijack, get held for ransom, run into violent crime like you've got in downtown L.A."

Even so, the good times are clearly on the wane. More and more journalists, for instance, are shunning the still-inflated prices charged for the airport run. "The road has been totally safe for a couple of years," one photographer tells me. "That's the mercs' dirty little secret." On his last trip out of Iraq, he said, he hired an ordinary taxi at the Al Hamra Hotel, rode it to a parking lot just outside Baghdad Airport, then climbed aboard a shuttle bus to the terminal. His total cost for the journey: $55.

JOSHUA HAMMER

Joshua Hammer is a freelance foreign correspondent based in Berlin.

With violence down in Iraq, private security firms are reducing rates.

CARL SCHULZE/NEWSCOM

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Out of the Wild

The last days of Alaska's kleptocracy.

The windswept Aleutian Island fishing port of Dutch Harbor is considered far-flung even by Alaska's adjusted standards, farther from the urban hub of Anchorage than New York City is from Madison, Wisconsin. It is, in other words, a good place to hide from the press. Which is perhaps why, on an unseasonably pleasant evening last September, I found myself standing alongside the second-to-last berth of the harbor's spit dock, calling up to the wheelhouse of an oilfield supply boat, the *Arctic Seal*, looking for an ex–crab fisherman named Ben Stevens.

"I don't think he's going to be talking to any reporters," said the balding, bespectacled middle-aged man in a burgundy polo shirt who appeared along the railing.

"I was hoping to maybe get a comment on a couple of things …" I offered lamely.

"Probably not," the man said.

"Can I leave a note for him with my phone—"

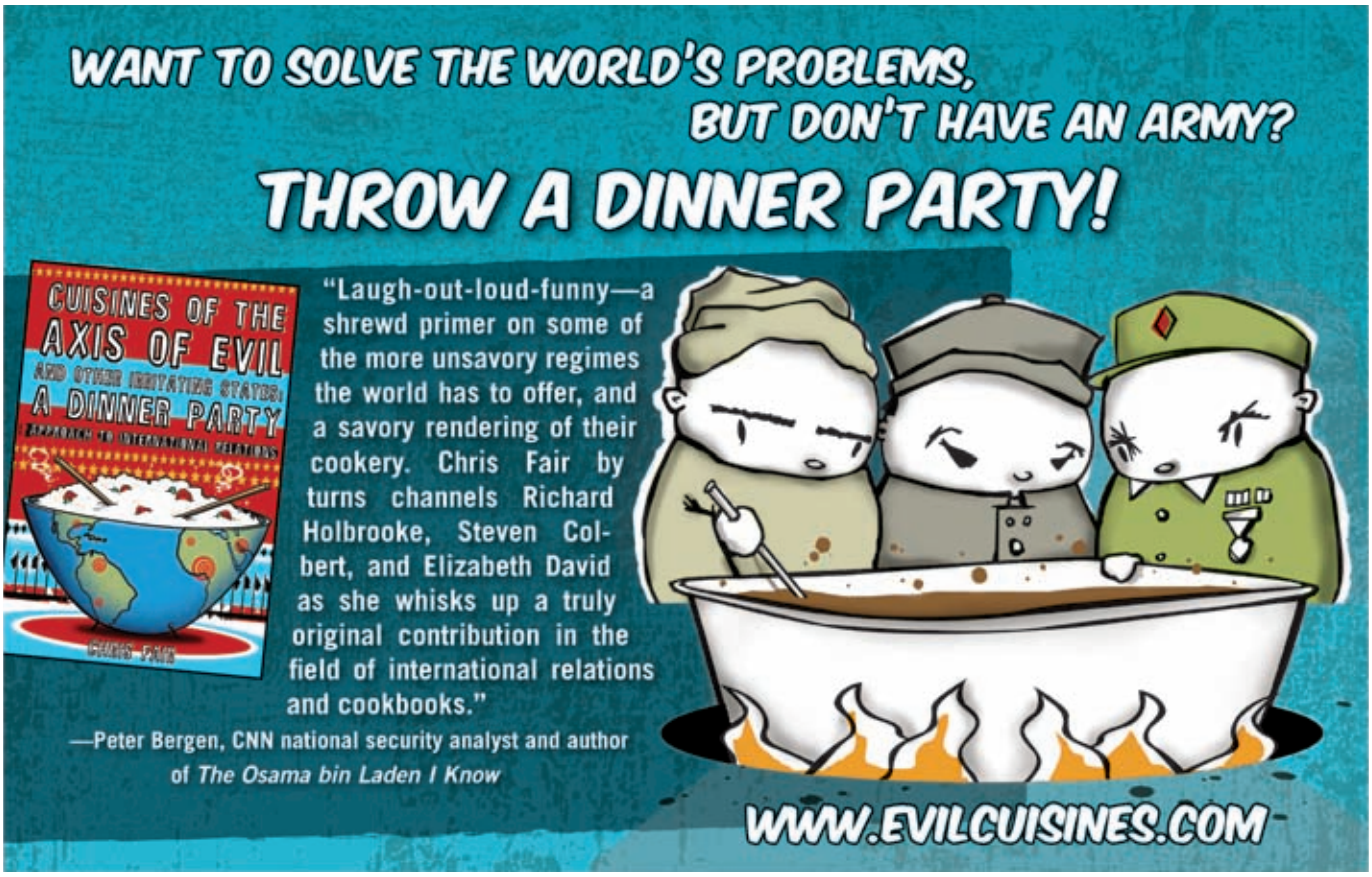
"Have a wonderful day," he said, and disappeared back into the wheelhouse.

In other states and other circumstances, an attempt to track down Stevens—the son of U.S. Senator Ted Stevens and, until the previous January, the president of Alaska's state Senate—probably would have ended at a receptionist's desk in a law firm's state capital office. But this was Alaska, and, after leaving the legislature, Stevens had become a mate on the *Arctic Seal*, which was on its way north to the Chukchi Sea. At the time, Stevens was probably better off at sea than on land. On August 31, 2006, FBI agents armed with search warrants had burst into his office, as well as those of five other state legislators, all of whom had been suspected of accepting bribes from executives of Veco Corporation, an Anchorage-based oilfield service company, over a piece of gas pipeline legislation.

The events of the past two years in Alaskan politics read like the last days of a venal institutional party somewhere in Latin America. Indeed, Alaska's history often resembles that of a kind of frozen banana republic: an idealistic political experiment projected onto an unsettled territory with a troubled colonial past, stagnating in the hands of a single ruling party bolstered by a monolithic resource extraction economy. Ted Stevens and Representative Don Young, the state's iconic strongmen, have collectively spent 75 years in Congress, in part by encouraging Alaska's resentfully transactional view of the federal government, which still owns most of the land within the state's borders and supports it with generous subsidies. In lieu of the United Fruit Company, Alaska has the North Slope oil fields, upon which the state has been economically dependent since the 1970s.

Following a flurry of scandals and indictments, however, the political culture in Alaska that nurtured politicians like Stevens and Young for so long seems to be on the wane. A new crop of politicians is emerging, declaiming against the old guard and promising reform. But are the corrupt traditions in Alaska too entrenched to allow for regime change?

Certainly, the current junta seems headed straight for disaster. Most of the Republican establishment's problems are at least tangentially related to the Veco investigation, which has yielded bribery and extortion convictions of three GOP state lawmakers and two lobbyists thus far, with more likely on the way. While Ben Stevens has so far avoided indictment, his father has proven less fortunate. On July 29, the elder Stevens—the longest-serving Republican in the U.S. Senate, who was named "Alaskan of the Century" by the state legislature in 2000—surrendered to authorities in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Washington after he was charged with failing to disclose hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of goods and services he allegedly received from Veco between 1999 and 2006. Young, Alaska's lone representative in the House for the last three-and-a-half decades, is also under federal investigation in connection with Veco—as well as for an aide's dealings with Jack Abramoff and a $10 million earmark written to benefit a campaign contributor.

Disgusted by the Veco scandals, Alaskans have begun to cast about for alternatives to the old guard. One sign of change came in the 2006 gubernatorial primaries, when Republican voters ditched the incumbent Frank Murkowski, a durable but little-loved icon of the establishment, for Sarah Palin, a newcomer running on a novel (for Alaska) platform of reforming and restoring the dignity of the state's political system. Palin had alienated much of Alaska's Republican leadership two years earlier by pursuing conflict-of-interest charges against state party chair Randy Ruedrich when they both sat on the state's Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (Ruedrich was slapped with a $12,000 fine and resigned his commission post).

Palin's victory paved the way for a new kind of Alaskan politician. This year's primary ballots are full of candidates—including Palin's Republican lieutenant governor, Sean Parnell, and the Democrats running against Young and Stevens, former state representative Ethan Berkowitz and Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich—who have sold themselves as agents of reform. (Barack Obama is also treating Alaska like a state on the verge of unprecedented change: *The Washington Post* reported this week that he has sent dozens of campaign workers there, dispatching bush pilots to fly them out to remote villages.) Berkowitz calls their ascendance a "Jeffersonian moment." And some changes in Alaska's circumstances have made its residents more receptive to a reform message. High oil prices have flooded Alaska's treasury and eased its need for federal money, even if it continues to receive it. The idea that the state's relationship with its twin patrons—Washington, D.C., and the petroleum industry—has been unbecoming and unhealthy, which no sane Alaskan politician would have touched a decade ago, has become a matter of active discussion.

"We can't keep waiting for Uncle Sam to solve our problems, and we can't keep waiting for big oil to deliver," Berkowitz says. "When Alaska has the ability to take care of itself, it should take care of itself. We can't act like a colony."

The old regime won't go down without a fight, of course. Last October, Parnell paid a visit to Young in his Washington offices. Young's suite in the Rayburn House building would not be easily confused with, say, Henry Waxman's; the walls are decorated with a bearskin, a walrus skull, and a wealth of other accessories to the representative's long-running Trapper-Jake-goes-to-Washington act. On various occasions, Young has waved the penis bone of a walrus—known in his home state as an *oosik*—at the head of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, brandished a buck knife on the House floor while castigating a Democratic congressman, and testified in defense of fur trapping with a steel leghold trap clamped onto his own hand for dramatic effect.

On this visit, which was meant to be a routine briefing, Parnell says, Young launched into a ten-minute tirade about Parnell's boss. The elder lawmaker called Palin a "crystal figure" and said he was "going to crush her"—and Parnell himself, if the lieutenant governor stayed too close to her (not surprisingly, Young has disputed the account). But Parnell called Young's bluff in March at the Alaska Republican Party convention, when he announced (standing within an *oosik*'s throw of the incumbent congressman) that he would be challenging Young in the party's August 26 primary.

Young is now trailing Parnell by three points in the Republican primary and, more incredibly, his likely Democratic challenger, State Representative Berkowitz, by eleven points in the general election—this in a state that hasn't sent a Democrat to Capitol Hill since voters retired Senator Mike Gravel in 1980, and has only been carried by one Democratic presidential candidate (Lyndon Johnson) in 49 years of statehood. As for Stevens, even before his indictment he was polling nine points behind Begich, the presumptive Democratic nominee—now he is down by 13. Until this year, Stevens was so popular that the state Democratic Party rarely bothered to field a serious candidate against him (in recent races, his most reliable Democratic challenger has been Frank Vondersaar, an eccentric attorney and self-described "anti-fascist" candidate who believes he is the target of a 25-year, Stevens-engineered conspiracy and doesn't own a telephone).

The office of Representative Don Young—rogue and authentic Alaskan.

ROLLCALLPIX/NEWSCOM

The price of Alaska's political renaissance, however, is a slate of depressingly conventional candidates for a state used to larger-than-life political icons. Parnell, for instance, who grew up in unremarkably urban Anchorage and practiced corporate law there before entering office, is a clean-cut, suburban kind of Republican. It is as easy to envision him running for office in Orange County as in the Arctic Circle—and pretty hard to see him arguing a bill with a bear trap on his arm.

Palin, at least, may be starting to dabble in her state's political heritage; legislators have ordered an investigation into her dismissal of a commissioner who ignored the governor's requests to fire

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her ex-brother-in-law when he was employed as a state trooper. The controversy has some uniquely Alaskan flourishes: In 2005, Palin had accused the trooper of, among other things, running down a wolf on a snowmobile and swilling Crown Royal whiskey straight from the bottle while driving home from a wrestling match. Compared to the scandals that are bringing down the generalissimos, this is small beer. But who knows—give Palin another 20-odd years of absolute Alaskan-style power, and reporters may find themselves trying to track her down on a dock somewhere in the Aleutian Islands.

CHARLES HOMANS

Charles Homans has written from Alaska for The Washington Monthly *and* The Economist.

Don't Tell

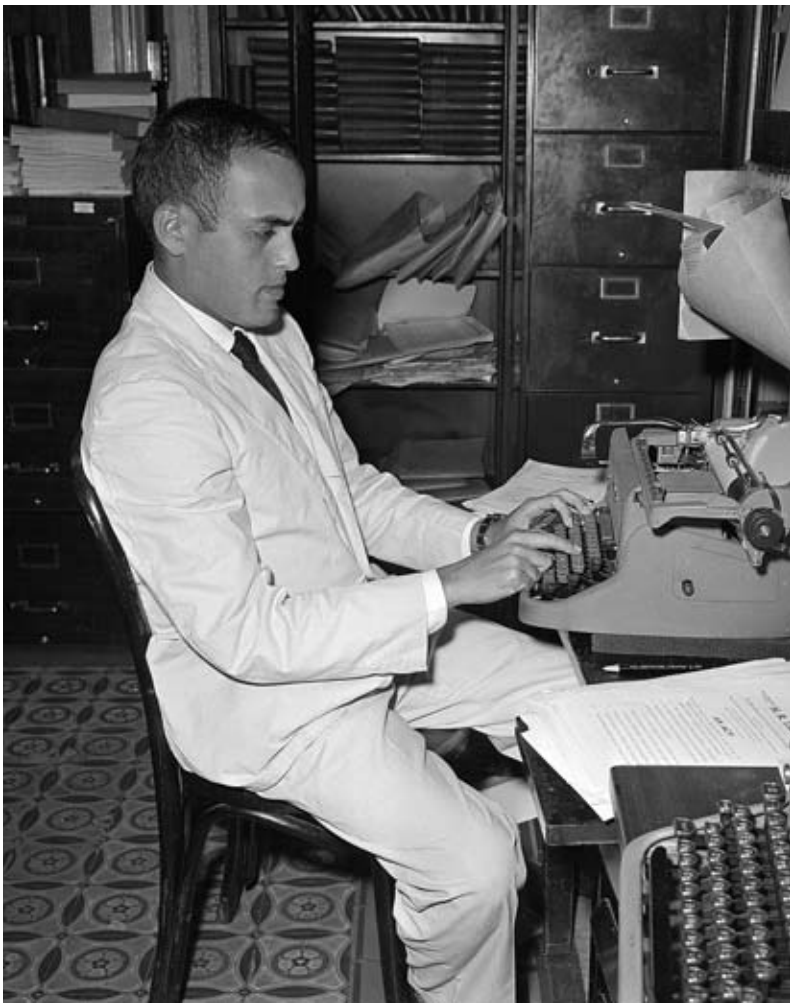
The fatal flaw in Bush's greatest accomplishment.

EVEN RABID Bush-haters will grudgingly grant the president one major foreign policy accomplishment: He has spent money combating global AIDS like no other world leader. Indeed, there was another round of plaudits last month when the Senate finally passed the $48 billion reauthorization for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR. The bill renewed legislation, first passed in 2003, that has allocated many billions for HIV treatment, testing, and prevention efforts in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Senator Joseph Biden has called PEPFAR "the single most significant thing the president has done."

And there's no doubt about the good PEPFAR has accomplished: About 1.7 million people infected with HIV currently receive antiretroviral medication thanks to the program. But, for all the lives PEPFAR has saved, it has done little to halt the spread of HIV among a critical demographic group: men who have sex with men, or MSM in public-health parlance (a clunky but necessary term, since many of these men also have female partners and do not self-identify as gay). The reason for this omission will surprise no one: Social conservatives left their stamp on the legislation at the expense of public health. So, even in its finest moment, the Bush administration allowed ideology to trump good policy.

INFORMATION ABOUT MSM in developing countries and their HIV rates is difficult to obtain. But epidemiologists at Johns Hopkins recently calculated

AP/HENRY GRIFFIN



Bob Novak, My Prince of Darkness

I WAS SAD TO HEAR the news last week about Bob Novak's brain tumor. I like and admire Novak, and even on occasion agree with him. (Hey, no one thought the Iraq war was a stupider idea than he.) Novak knows what he believes. He sticks by it. And if you—or all those nutty neocons or congressional big spenders—don't like it, you can all go take a flying leap.

More personally, Novak has always been exceedingly nice to me whenever we've run across each other on Capitol Hill, the campaign trail, or the makeup room of some random cable studio. He has helped me with the occasional article. And, at some long ago presidential debate (I'm thinking it was Boston in 2000), when I was without a rental car, he even offered to drive me downtown to the event from the far-flung hotel where we were both staying. I still count that ride as among the most harrowing experiences of my career.

Finally, some of the most fun I've had on television was squabbling with Novak on Al Hunt's political chat show on Bloomberg. Listening to Novak and Hunt swap stories and insult each other before and after the segment was a gas. I swear the two behave just like an old married couple.

Anyway, this is all by way of wishing the Prince of Darkness a speedy return to health. Conservatives need someone to keep them honest. Washington journalism needs someone to keep it colorful. And I need someone to call for stories about the good old days.

MICHELLE COTTLE

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that MSM in low- and middle- income countries were 19 times more likely to have HIV than the overall adult population. In one study in Senegal, 22 percent of MSM were found to be HIV-positive, compared to just 1 percent of all adults. The Johns Hopkins epidemiologists pooled each country's data and estimated HIV prevalence among MSM to be 12 percent in Peru, 15 percent in India, and 25 percent in Thailand—in all cases, many times higher than in the total population. In some countries, infection rates appear to be rising more quickly among MSM than among other groups. Yet, globally, less than 10 percent of them have access to adequate HIV services and information, according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

Beyond the numbers, epidemiologists are especially alarmed because social and legal mores have made it hard to reach out to the MSM population in Third World countries. For one thing, many of these men don't perceive themselves to be at risk of HIV infection, and so they are less likely to look for help under any circumstances. But, even worse, in much of the developing world, public discussion of sexual orientation—and, most critically, the risk of HIV infection through same-sex contact—is almost impossible due to anti-gay attitudes. Earlier this year in Egypt, for example, nine men, most of them HIV-positive, were convicted of "habitual practices of debauchery" and sentenced to prison. It's hard to imagine that these cases, which were widely publicized by Human Rights Watch and other groups, will encourage gay men in Egypt to seek counseling and treatment. So, even with abundant funding, it would not be easy to craft sensitive and appropriate policies in countries where homosexuality is illegal or taboo.

But PEPFAR has further complicated efforts to reach these groups. Since its inception, PEPFAR has required that a large percentage of its prevention funds be spent promoting abstinence until marriage—a strategy that, by definition, pretty much excludes recognition of same-sex relationships. PEPFAR has also mandated that organizations receiving funds denounce prostitution, a stance that makes HIV outreach to male sex workers more difficult. And the PEPFAR legislation included a so-called "conscience clause" that, according to a report published earlier this year by the conservative Heritage Foundation, "ensures that faith-based groups are not required to provide services they don't support"—including for men who have sex with men.

AIDS activists point to an Ugandan evangelical leader, Martin Ssempa, as Exhibit A in their case that PEPFAR's approach can harm the fight against the disease. Ssempa, the pastor of Makerere Community Church in Kampala, Uganda's capital, and a vigorous supporter of the abstinence approach to HIV prevention, has denounced condom use and condemned homosexuality, yet his church has received PEPFAR funding to promote its faith-based message. Last year, after gay rights activists staged a protest in Kampala, news reports quoted Ssempa as saying that "homosexuals should absolutely not be included in Uganda's HIV/AIDS framework. It is a crime, and when you are trying to stamp out a crime, you don't include it in your programs."

Public health experts have long complained about PEPFAR's restrictions, and recent reports evaluating the program have echoed those criticisms. Last year, a report by the Institute of Medicine urged PEPFAR to "increas[e] attention to marginalized populations," citing men who have sex with men as a key example. In 2006, the Government Accountability Office found that the abstinence requirements presented a "challenge" to those implementing the program and that "country teams have, in some cases, reduced or cut funding for certain prevention programs, such as programs to deliver comprehensive … messages to populations at risk of contracting HIV."

The original PEPFAR legislation did not prohibit support for MSM outreach, and some efforts have been funded. But Ellen Marshall, a public policy consultant with the International Women's Health Coalition, says that countries receiving PEPFAR money generally feel they must conform to priorities and directives established in the United States. "Countries where PEPFAR funds are invested are very aware of what U.S. policy is, and they don't want to have policies that are more expansive for fear of potentially losing U.S. dollars," says Marshall.

TWINGLEY'S WORLD

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Some major donor organizations, including the Gates Foundation and amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research, have recently started to focus attention on the issue, which was also discussed and debated at the Seventeenth International AIDS Conference held this week in Mexico City. Even the recently approved version of PEPFAR, a compromise between social conservatives and the Democrats who now control Congress, could help. Although the new legislation retains some of the ideological constraints found in PEPFAR's initial iteration, it cites the importance of addressing the epidemic among men who have sex with men. That's certainly an improvement, but it's still not a substitute for adequate education and counseling and outreach—the commonsense solutions that ideology shouldn't be blocking.

David Tuller

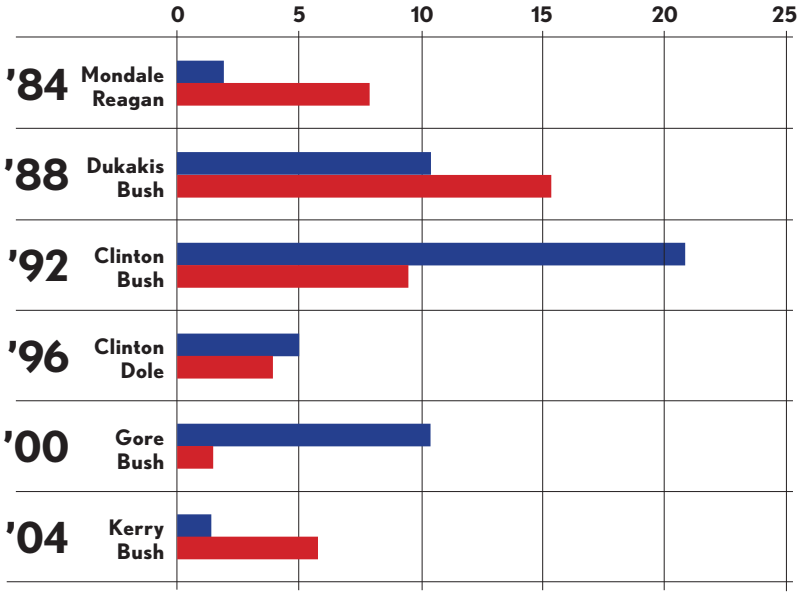
David Tuller is a freelance journalist in San Francisco and a lecturer in journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Bounce Is Real: Why Conventions Matter

The modern political convention probably originated in 1984, when Democrats, wary of the fallout from Ted Kennedy having challenged Jimmy Carter to a floor fight at their 1980 convention in New York, implemented a system of superdelegates to ensure that disputes about the nomination process could be resolved by party elders long before they hit the convention floor, allowing the conventions to serve principally as four-day advertisements. It didn't do much good for their nominee that year, Walter Mondale, who received only a two-point bounce from his convention. But other candidates have used the new, news-free convention to better effect. George H.W. Bush got better than a 15-point bounce from his convention in 1988, and Bill Clinton's bounce in his 1992 campaign was enormous. In fact, while the convention bounce usually fades—often after mere days—it does serve as a litmus test of the enthusiasm for that candidate. Since 1984, the candidate receiving the larger convention bounce has also won the popular vote.

Nate Silver

Gain in Polling Margin in Weeks After Convention



Gain in the candidate's polling margin over his opponent, as determined by averaging all polls completed in the week immediately before the convention, and comparing them to an average of all polls completed in the week immediately after the convention. Where no polls were available in those time frames, the most proximate polls were used.

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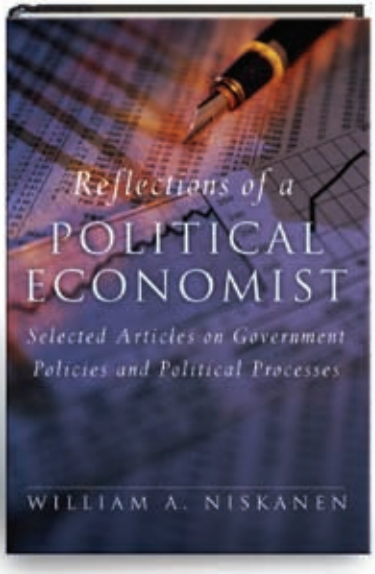
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The Woman to See

Meet Valerie Jarrett, Barack Obama's fixer.

MICHELLE COTTLE

REUTERS/CORBIS

The black Tahoe slows to a crawl as Valerie Jarrett, Barack Obama's political wise woman and longtime friend, gestures toward a forlorn expanse of weeds running along State Street in the blighted Bronzeville neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. "It was just this *wall* of high-rise buildings along the expressway," she says, "And now—it's all gone."

Jarrett is referring to the Robert Taylor Homes, the two-mile stretch of tenements named for her grandfather that once loomed over this spot. A housing activist and the first African American to head the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), Robert Taylor famously resigned in 1950, when the city council rejected a development plan that would have spurred integration. In 1962, three years after Taylor's death, the Robert Taylor Homes were opened and loudly touted as the largest affordable-housing development in the nation. But, by the time the CHA removed the last occupants in 2006, the drug-and-blood-soaked towers had, ironically, become a super-sized symbol of the racial and economic segregation Taylor had long fought. Back in the day, a vehicle like Jarrett's cruising at this speed along this block would have drawn hostile looks—and maybe more—from the gangs who fought for control of the development.

But Jarrett—a pretty, petite woman looking decidedly not-of-the-neighborhood with her Chanel sunglasses, trim black suit, and crisp white blouse—has brought me to this spot not because of its past but because she sees Chicago's future here. A former city planning commissioner turned for-profit developer, Jarrett has been at the forefront of an effort to redevelop this failed space for going on a decade. She says she didn't get into urban renewal specifically to redeem her grandfather's legacy. But, having been "sensitized" to his perspective, she has long grappled with "figuring out a way to improve the health of the city by giving people who had been living in isolation better opportunities to move toward self-sufficiency." (Yes, she really talks like that.) Soon, Jarrett enthuses, a cluster of town homes will rise on this site, some set aside for public housing, others priced for the working poor, and still others sold at market rate. With smart planning, and a little luck, the development will help revitalize the surrounding area—as has occurred in other neighborhoods.

Indeed, State Street is just one stop on our more than two-hour tour. Jarrett glows as we wind through neighborhoods where public housing units have been strategically scattered among privately owned homes. "One house on that block was public housing. I won't tell you which one," she challenges as we ease down a tidy residential lane once dominated by boarded-up vacants. Now and again, she gets so wrapped up in showing

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off her handiwork that she forgets basic road rules—like staying in her lane or not stopping in the middle of an intersection when the light is green. (Note to self: Next time, offer to drive.) Jarrett seems not to notice the angry honking.

When I set out to discover what makes the woman described as Obama's "big sister" tick, it never occurred to me I'd wind up spending a Thursday afternoon cruising Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. After all, Jarrett's c.v. reads less like that of a bleeding-heart liberal than a sedulous careerist: Post–law school, she spent six years as a real estate attorney followed by eight years at City Hall (first in the legal office, then as deputy chief of staff to the mayor, and finally as commissioner of planning and development). She then decamped for the Habitat Co. (of which she is now CEO), one of Chicago's largest for-profit real estate development and management firms and, since 1987, the court-appointed overseer for all of Chicago's new non-elderly public housing. She is the vice chair of the University of Chicago board of trustees, the chair of the university's Medical Center board, and trustee of another dozen corporate, civic, and charitable organizations, including the committee spearheading Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympics. And of course, these days, she is frequently on the plane and perpetually on the phone with her good friend Barack. In a dissection of The Chicago Establishment, the 51-year-old Jarrett would be found deep in the heart.

But pursuing change from within has long been Jarrett's m.o. Like Obama, she does not seek to fight the system so much as infiltrate it, scale it, and make it work for her. It is a quieter, less dramatic form of activism that can cause friction with some of Jarrett's more traditional liberal allies—much the way Obama's post-racial positioning has raised eyebrows among older-generation black leaders such as Al Sharpton and, more caustically, Jesse "I want to cut his nuts off" Jackson. For Jarrett, however, unifying people behind the system rather than against it has become something of an art form. Increasingly, her goal is to help Barack Obama do the same.

Behind the aggressively bland title of "senior adviser," Jarrett's cardinal role on the Obama campaign is to serve as an extension of the candidate. She is Obama's eyes and ears at meetings and events. When she speaks, it is in his voice. She is often the one to deliver harsh truths to Obama—and to others on his behalf. And, when there is courting of vital constituencies to be done, Jarrett is an undisputed master. (Late last month, for instance, she headed to New York for a heart-to-heart with Democratic money maven and hard-core Hillaryite Maureen White—with whom Jarrett was looking forward to spending more time on Martha's Vineyard this month.) Among the most ticklish situations that she's been called upon to address thus far is Obama's standing with black voters.

Nowadays, anyone questioning Obama's popularity among African American voters would be laughed from the room. Up through last year, however, the landscape was grimmer. Polls showed the Illinois senator trailing Hillary Clinton among this key Democratic demographic, a situation complicated by the loyalty many black political leaders felt toward Bill Clinton. With the campaign focused heavily on Iowa, limited resources had been devoted to courting the black community. Worse still, there persisted grumbling around the edges of the race about whether the half-white, Ivy-League-educated, yuppie-ish Obama was "black enough." Obama was in a tricky spot. Rejecting the mantle of Black Candidate, he had to keep his distance from some of the traditional "black issues" (not to mention some of the traditional black leaders) that could racialize the election. Even assuming his poll numbers eventually ticked up, if black leaders felt they and their issues were being dismissed, there would be hell to pay.

Jarrett had a fine line to walk: reassuring without overpromising, energizing without polarizing. And she lacked the national profile or civil rights credentials that might have made the job easier. If anything, her background carries the scent of privilege and cosmopolitanism that one might expect to cause trouble in certain circles.

Robert Taylor, Jarrett's maternal grandfather, is not her only illustrious forebear. Higher up the family tree, Taylor's father, Robert Robinson Taylor (the first black student to graduate from MIT), was an architect, instructor, and vice-principal at the Tuskegee Institute at the turn of last century. And his father, Henry Taylor, the son of a white slave-owner and a black mother, managed to build a successful contracting and construction business in pre–Civil War North Carolina.

Valerie Bowman's own upbringing was a blend of the exotic and traditional. At the time of her birth, her parents were living in Shiraz, Iran, where father James, a geneticist and pathologist, was helping set up a hospital. When Valerie was five, James moved the family to London for a one-year fellowship. In 1963, the Bowmans returned to Chicago, where James joined the University of Chicago faculty. Settling into the eclectic Hyde Park neighborhood, Valerie grew up surrounded by family. Recalling the aunts, uncles, grandma, and 17 cousins who lived within a few blocks of the house, Barbara Bowman chuckles about raising her daughter in "a family compound."

Today, Jarrett lives in a stately art-deco co-op in the Kenwood neighborhood just north of Hyde Park with her daughter Laura. (Home for the summer from Harvard Law, Laura is the only child of Jarrett's short-lived union with Dr. William Robert Jarrett, son of the late *Sun-Times* columnist Vernon Jarrett. The couple wed in 1983 and divorced in 1988; five years later, William suffered a fatal heart attack.) Deeply rooted in what is commonly referred to as Hyde Park–Kenwood, Jarrett threatens to tear up as we tour some of its more sentimental landmarks: her parents' home (on the same elegant, leafy street where the Obamas now live), the University of Chicago (where her father remains a professor emeritus in the Division of Biological Sciences), the university-affiliated Lab School that both she and her daughter attended (all pale limestone and ivied), the site of her first date (a grassy expanse of park perfect for a moonlit stroll), the house that her maternal grandmother moved into the minute the segregationist housing covenants were struck down in the 1950s.

As grounded as Valerie is in Hyde Park, the Bowmans saw to it early that their only child's perspective extended far beyond it: Well into her teens, Valerie spent summers traveling the globe (Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt . . .) with her parents, as James conducted research and Barbara, a co-founder of the Erikson Institute for child development, studied other cultures' education models. For her last two years of high school, Valerie went east to the Massachusetts prep school her mother had attended. She headed west to Stanford for college and then on to the University of Michigan Law School. With J.D. in hand, she promptly returned home to Chicago. But, unlike Obama who cut his political teeth as a community organizer, Jarrett followed a more inside route, winding through both the private sector and City Hall.

Jarrett's comfort with the establishment and membership in the black elite helped shape the strategy she formulated last summer to introduce Obama to black voters. Jarrett put together an African American working group and tasked it with targeting black leaders.

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But, according to participant Eric Holder, Jarrett urged the team to think beyond black churches and high-profile spokesmen and connect with black media outlets, businesspeople, and other opinion leaders "who really do influence people but who aren't necessarily as well-known as others." And, while early voting states and big urban centers were an obvious focus, says Holder, she also pushed outreach to mid-level cities with smaller black populations like Albany "to generate support in places where you would not expect it." If it wasn't exactly an end-run around traditional black leaders, it was clearly a recognition that the community's power-base has expanded.

Valerie Jarrett—Barack Obama's Clark Clifford—on the campaign trail in Pennsylvania.

EVEN WITH the new breed of powerbrokers on board, Jarrett still needed to reassure traditional leaders that Obama shared their basic ideals despite his "post-racial" approach. Arguably, there was no better preparation for this task than the eight-year political education Jarrett received inside Chicago's fractious City Hall.

In 1987, Jarrett joined the city's Corporation Counsel office in the wake of the reelection of Mayor Harold Washington. Like many of the young, liberal idealists who followed Washington into City Hall, Jarrett hailed from Chicago's Independent strand of Democrats (for which Hyde Park is ground zero), who for years had been shut out of government by Mayor Richard J. Daley's machine. But, in 1989, Daley the Younger reclaimed his father's perch and the Independents began to flee. Jarrett opted to stay on, much to the dismay of her Independent allies, who warned that she would get sucked into the machine and lose her progressive ideals. (It didn't help that the '80s were a particularly nasty period of racialization in Chicago politics.) Jarrett says she shared some of those same concerns but wanted to see if she could continue her development plans under the new regime. Besides, she chuckles, "having grown up here, how much heat am I going to take? People knew who I was. They knew my family."

Before long, she had established herself as one of Daley's most trusted advisers. And so, for the next few years, as Jarrett moved from post to post within the administration, she found herself negotiating the bitter divide not only between competing interest groups (developers, community activists, politicos . . .) but also between Daley's people and their Independent antagonists, such as Hyde Park Alderman Toni Preckwinkle. Daley and Preckwinkle squabble about pretty much everything—"it doesn't have to be a policy difference," sighs Jarrett. "Whatever the issue would be, sometimes I would go to her and say, 'Here's the mayor's perspective.' And I would go to the mayor and say, 'Here's Toni's perspective.'" But mostly, laughs Jarrett, "what I tried to do was get them to agree on issues for which I was responsible" like development.

Jarrett found herself calling on these same mediation skills to personally bridge the gap between Obama and the more conventional black leadership, including civil rights icons and old-school purveyors of identity politics. She quickly became the campaign's chief ambassador to this cohort, meeting with leaders and fielding their calls to explain Obama's vision, answer questions, and address concerns.

One of Jarrett's better-known conferees has been the Reverend Al Sharpton. As Sharpton tells it, he was initially skeptical of Obama—until Jarrett went to work on him. "Part of what moved me from, 'Who is Barack Obama and what is he really about?' to 'Yes, this is a guy who can help make changes even if we're not on the same page in terms of style and approach'—a lot of that came from talking to her," he gushes. Jarrett was upfront about areas where Obama disagreed with Sharpton, and she took care not to raise unrealistic expectations. ("She was very clear that the senator was not trying to be 'a black leader,'" says Sharpton.) But, he adds, her "sincerity and soft touch" soothe the waters even when she's saying "no." "Sometimes I've called into the campaign with an issue I thought was upsetting," recalls Sharpton. Whether the matter is political (such as the campaign's response to a smear) or policy related (such as Obama's vote on the FISA bill), says Sharpton, "she's so calm herself that you find yourself fighting to stay calm as well, trying to even out your tone."

And watching her work her mojo on Clinton loyalists within the black leadership left him "in awe," asserts the reverend. "There were a lot of passions, a lot of debts owed the Clintons, and for her to navigate those [relationships] without making people feel less than respected but at the same time not make it look like the senator had to move their agenda forward was masterful." Says Sharpton, "At the end of the day, she gained everyone's respect—something unheard of—and everyone's trust."

NOW, AL SHARPTON is a smart guy: He knows the wisdom of lauding the woman at the right hand of the man poised to be president. But the reverend's description of Jarrett in action is echoed by numerous people she has worked with (and even clashed with) over the years. Plus, Jarrett's sprawling network of friends and colleagues has the markings of someone who leaves her bridges intact. "She may be one of the most plugged-in people in the United States," jokes Obama press maven Anita Dunn. Certainly few people in Chicago are better connected. (Jarrett boasts an impressive entry on Muckety.com's list of the city's "100 best networked.") She knows the aldermen, the ward-heelers, the business execs, the union bosses, the neighborhood activists, the religious

AP/JAE C. HONG

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and civic leaders, the journalists, the political appointees and consultants, and the bureaucrats. When someone needs help organizing a benefit for their civic group, finding an internship for their kid, or raising money for their political campaign, Jarrett is a good woman to call. (If the constantly vibrating cell phone and ever-present Blackberry are any indication, plenty of people do just that.) In turn, when Jarrett needs buy-in for a project—be it revamping a rundown neighborhood or helping a friend run for president—she is well positioned to stroke or twist the appropriate arms.

With Jarrett's national profile ascendant, few of her fellow insiders are eager to criticize. Jarrett is described by past and current colleagues as "firm," "direct," "demanding," and quick to question a position or action she disagrees with. (And, when she asks, you better have answers, says Obama strategy guru David Axelrod: "She can send some pretty bracing e-mails.") Even Preckwinkle, who recently endured a couple of run-ins with Jarrett—one over Preckwinkle's vote on an Olympic-related issue and another over some Obama criticisms she made to *The New Yorker*—declined to discuss their periodic clashes. The audibly tense alderman emphasized that despite an "occasionally strained" relationship, "we've continued to be friends over time."

Jarrett's success as a mover and shaker is testament to her conviction that one can pursue outsider ideals from an insider vantage point. Fittingly, it was in the service of proselytizing this belief that she first encountered Barack Obama. By now, the story of Obama and Jarrett's initial meeting is familiar: In 1991, a young, civic-minded attorney named Michelle Robinson was thinking about joining Daley's team. Before accepting, Michelle asked if Jarrett, her potential boss, would mind talking through a few things with her future husband. "He was worried about the same things that I worried about when Daley first got elected," says Jarrett. "Would [the mayor] be sufficiently progressive? Would Michelle get caught up in the Democratic machine? Would she be able to—if she disagreed with something the mayor wanted to do, would she be forced to do it?"

Jarrett assures me the "interview" wasn't as odd as it sounds: "As far as I was concerned, the situation had shifted from me being the person interviewing Michelle to selling her on the job. And, if that meant I had to sell her fiancé too—because this is what I *do*—I was happy to have dinner with them." Jarrett ended up talking about herself—her family, her passions, her politics, her own experiences dealing with City Hall—until she had adequately eased the couple's concerns (many of which she had previously wrestled with herself).

And, so, the Obamas were drawn into Jarrett's inner circle. She and Michelle in particular clicked. ("Ohhhhh yeah," says one insider. "They look out for each other.") When Jarrett left the mayor's office for the planning commission, she took her protégé with her. Later, Michelle served as an employee-officer of first the University of Chicago and later the medical center during Jarrett's tenure on both boards. Similarly, as Barack's political ambitions began to gel, Jarrett was on hand with thoughtful counsel—as well as insider knowledge of the Chicago political scene and its key players. Four years later, though the stakes are higher and the stage bigger, Jarrett provides some of the same aid.

It's impossible to judge the precise impact of Jarrett's courting of black voters, or even black leaders. (So many variables at play: Obama's win in lily-white Iowa, Bill Clinton's meltdown in South Carolina, Jesse Jackson Sr. versus Jesse Jackson Jr., Jeremiah Wright …) But Jarrett's colleagues laud her for aggressively tackling the issue and clearing away as many potential hurdles as possible along Obama's path to 90 percent support among African Americans. Better still, she did it in that low-key, work-the-system style that she has long favored—and that Obama is claiming as a hallmark of his leadership. Of course, as is so often the case, playing a quiet, inside game lacks the purity—and clarity—of struggling against the system. And it can be tough at times to tell just how much you are really accomplishing.

Our last tour stop was, for years, the nation's most notorious housing project: Cabrini-Green, located on the Near North Side next to some of Chicago's toniest neighborhoods. Though much of the complex has been razed, three of the towers still stand, all the more prominent because of the open space around them. Many units in the shabby, white buildings are vacant, and some bear the scars of fires. Jarrett calls these "the hostage buildings," units unable to come down because of legal wrangling with residents upset over the redevelopment process. They are a concrete reminder of how far the CHA's "Plan for Transformation" has yet to go.

Being part of the establishment invariably invites suspicion from those on the outside, and, with a project as overwhelming as overhauling Chicago's public housing, the opportunity for conflict and controversy is limitless. Some resident groups and homeless advocates contend that the city and its for-profit development partners (like Habitat) are gaming the system, letting properties deteriorate so they can be condemned and then more easily redeveloped. "If what they wanted to happen was that poor people in the city go away, it was a good plan for the city. But as far as people needing housing is concerned, it wasn't a good plan," charges Carol Steele, co-founder of the Coalition to Protect Public Housing. Periodically, the local press runs stories detailing the overhaul's failures: the missed construction deadlines, the culture clashes in the mixed-income developments, the lack of meaningful integration (politics being what they are, most public housing still winds up in non-affluent, non-white neighborhoods), maintenance and construction problems with some newer complexes, and, most tragically, the struggle of many poor families to find stable replacement housing—in some cases, years after being turned out of the high-rises. With her Obama ties, Jarrett has also begun drawing national scrutiny. In late June, for instance, *The Boston Globe* ran a scathing account of how ongoing problems at the Habitat-managed Grove Parc Plaza prompted the city to seize the complex in 2006 and reassign oversight to a Boston-based firm.

Jarrett acknowledges that Habitat has occasionally taken on more than it could handle. More broadly, she admits that progress on the "Plan for Transformation" has been much slower than anyone expected—and that the housing crash stands to exacerbate the problem. But, even at Cabrini-Green, the snags of capitalism and politics notwithstanding, she sees progress. The site is ringed by newer residential developments, including market-rate town homes valued at over half a million dollars. For Jarrett, having people pay that kind of money to live in the shadow of a place once known as "Little Hell"—alongside some of Cabrini's relocated residents—is unbelievable. "So this is the perfect view!" she announces, circling around to the north side of the towers. "Market rate, single-family homes across the street, juxtaposed with Cabrini-Green."

Well, not exactly perfect. Chicago is nowhere near achieving Robert Taylor's dream of safe, affordable housing for all. But it's a start—and Jarrett has always been more inclined toward evolution than revolution. "In the end," she tells me, "I think some things take time because they should." ◆

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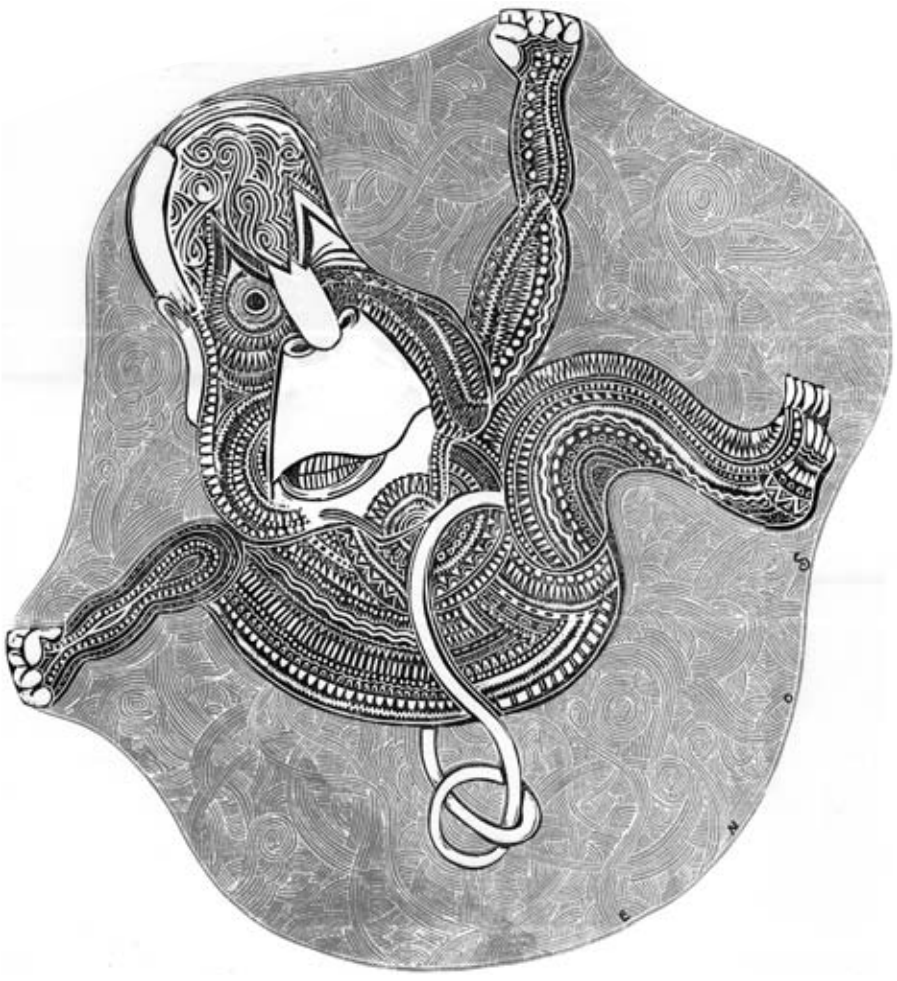

Life Sentence

Stop kidding yourself: John McCain is a pro-life zealot.

SARAH BLUSTAIN

John McCain was mad. Fuming mad. It was then the early days of his political career, and he had paid an unscheduled visit to a Planned Parenthood clinic in Mesa, which was within his Arizona congressional district. That's when Gloria Feldt, then the CEO of the group's local chapter, got a phone call. "Congressman McCain is here," a staffer told her, "and he is screaming and it is upsetting the patients."

Feldt says McCain had always refused her offers to visit a clinic, but had apparently decided to make a spot visit of his own. What had raised his ire was a shelf containing information about Title X federal funding, which some clinics receive to support non-abortion-related reproductive health care for low-income women. McCain was upset that the clinic provided paper for people to write their representatives in support of the legislation, which requires constant advocacy because Congress must reauthorize it every year. "His immediate and incorrect assumption," says Feldt, "was that we were using federal funds to pay for lobbying." Feldt got on the phone. "He was screaming, 'I am going to defund her, I am going to get the federal government to defund you.' … [H]e rants and he raves and finally he hangs up on me."

Most voters would not recognize that passionate crusader as John McCain. Which is hardly surprising. McCain has spent years manipulating the public's perception of his stance on abortion and reproductive health. He's been against overturning *Roe* v. *Wade* and he's been for it; he's embraced the idea of a pro-choice running mate and, more recently, recoiled from it. It's no wonder the public is confused.

The right has been twisted in knots for years over whether McCain respects "life" enough to earn its support. And, among Democrats and pro-choicers, the confusion is even greater. Poll after poll shows them unclear on McCain's positions. Planned

Randall Enos

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Parenthood's president Cecile Richards says that, even after McCain secured the Republican nomination this year, long-time Planned Parenthood supporters she met with didn't know the candidate's position on *Roe* v. *Wade*. McCain's maverick reputation and his calculated political meanderings on choice add up to one thing: The public thinks McCain just might be a moderate on abortion.

The fact that he's not could matter a great deal in the election. According to one poll, about half of all women voters backing McCain said they were pro-choice, including 36 percent who say they strongly support *Roe*. More importantly, these women voters think that McCain might agree with them on abortion. The same research found that "more than seven in ten pro-choice McCain supporters … have yet to learn that McCain's position on abortion is directly at odds with their own." And the issue is not that they don't care. One June poll found that, when Democratic women voters in twelve battleground states learned McCain's position on abortion, Obama gained twelve points among them.

McCain's views may matter especially to Hillary Clinton supporters, many of whom are pro-choice; according to syndicated columnist Froma Harrop, "[T]hey'll want to know this: Would McCain stock the Supreme Court with foes of *Roe* v. *Wade*?" But, she writes, "The answer is unclear but probably 'no.' While McCain has positioned himself as 'pro-life' during this campaign, his statements over the years show considerable latitude on the issue."

That, however, is simply not true. There is no "latitude" in McCain's position on abortion. Interviews with dozens of people who have dealt with him on the issue—pro-choice and pro-life activists, Hill staffers, McCain confidants, pollsters, and staffers—along with a two-and-a-half-decade-long perfectly anti-abortion voting record, make that clear. And his record on related issues, like contraception, is no better. "I think it is outrageous that people give him a pass, as they gave George W. Bush a pass," reflects Feldt. "John McCain will be that and worse."

The confounding problem with Mr. Straight Talk is that his public statements on abortion have been anything but straight. This meandering began most seriously in 1999, as McCain made his first bid for the presidency. On the eve of that campaign he told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that he'd "love to see a point where [*Roe*] is irrelevant, and could be repealed because abortion is no longer necessary. … But certainly in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support repeal of *Roe* v. *Wade*, which would then force X number of women in America to [undergo] illegal and dangerous operations." That same year, he suggested that Republicans revert to the language of the party's 1980 platform, which affirmed GOP support of a constitutional amendment to defend the unborn, but also "recognize[d] differing views on this question among Americans in general—and in our own Party." McCain said, "I believe we are an inclusive party, and we can be so without changing our principles." He also told reporters that if his then-15-year-old daughter got pregnant, they would make "a private decision that we would share within our family and not with anyone else"—a response that to some ears sounded a lot like code for the right to privacy and abortion. McCain even said he would consider a pro-choice running mate.

It was ideologically moderate but politically dangerous positions like these that earned McCain his reputation as a "maverick"—and that got him creamed by the GOP's right-wing base. The National Right to Life Committee helped destroy him in the all-important South Carolina primary, running ads that said, "If you want a strongly pro-life president … don't support John McCain."

So, this time around, McCain has swerved sharply to the right. The campaign website of the same man who, eight years ago, said *Roe* shouldn't be overturned now says, "John McCain believes *Roe* v. *Wade* is a flawed decision that must be overturned, and as president he will nominate judges who understand that courts should not be in the business of legislating from the bench." He sent heartfelt words to the National Right to Life Committee's annual convention: "I am pro-life," he told them, "because I know what it is like to live without human rights, where human life is accorded no inherent value. And I know that I have a personal obligation to advocate human rights wherever they are denied … when we fail to respect the inherent dignity of all human life, born or unborn." McCain's advisers have said that he will not fight to soften the Republican platform on abortion, and McCain himself has said that it would be "difficult" to choose a pro-choice running mate.

To many voters, the McCain of 2000 is the true McCain, with his latest statements constituting an understandable, if undignified, pander to the GOP's right-wing base. They simply cannot believe that the maverick who defied the party's hard-core social conservatives on embryonic stem cell research and campaign finance reform would toe the conservative line on abortion. But, in truth, it was his 2000 position on abortion that was the outlier—a short-lived attempt to court the center after George W. Bush had locked up the religious right's support. McCain is not, and never was, a moderate.

During his political career, McCain has participated in 130 reproductive health–related votes on Capitol Hill; of these, he voted with the anti-abortion camp in 125. McCain has consistently backed rights for the unborn, voting to cover fetuses under the State Children's Health Insurance Program and supporting the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which allowed a "child in utero" to be recognized as a legal victim of a crime. He has voted in favor of the global gag rule, which prevents U.S. funds from going to international family-planning clinics that use their own money to perform abortions, offer information about abortion, or take a pro-choice stand. And he has voted to appoint half a dozen anti-abortion judges to the federal bench, as well as Samuel Alito, John Roberts, Clarence Thomas, and Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. During the Bork hearings, McCain attacked the Court's creation of a right to privacy in *Roe* v. *Wade*: "Whether one is pro- or anti-abortion," McCain said in an October 1987 hearing, "it is difficult to argue that the Court's opinion is not constitutionally suspect."

Some of these votes were, politically speaking, no-brainers for anyone vaguely in the pro-life camp. But McCain also joined efforts supported only by the radical wing of his party. He voted, for instance, with only one-fifth of the Senate to remove family-planning grants from a 1988 spending bill and with only 18 senators that same year against allowing Medicaid to pay for abortions in cases of rape or incest.

In 1994, the year after abortion provider David Gunn was killed outside a Florida clinic, McCain voted with 29 members of the Senate against establishing penalties for violent or threatening interference outside abortion clinics. Many solidly pro-life Republicans—Mitch McConnell, Kit Bond, John Danforth—voted in favor of the bill, called the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE). "We tried to get as many co-sponsors as we could, and we postured the thing as anti–vigilante

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violence," recalls Judy Appelbaum, a Washington lawyer who was counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy at the time and the lead Hill staffer on the bill. "We argued that, even if you oppose abortion, you should not condone these actions." According to Appelbaum, law enforcement officials, newspaper editorialists, health care providers, and law-and-order politicians all supported the bill. "There were a number of very anti-choice senators who voted for FACE," she says, "and [McCain] wasn't one of them." Instead, McCain joined senators like Orrin Hatch and Jesse Helms in opposition.

Conservative writer Charlotte Allen summarized McCain's congressional career well last year in *The Weekly Standard*, noting, "[He] has never failed to cast his vote in favor of whatever abortion restrictions are arguably permitted under *Roe* v. *Wade*: bans against partial-birth abortion, abortions on military bases, transporting minors across state lines to obtain abortions behind their parents' backs, and government funding for abortion both in the United States and abroad. … In addition, McCain has voted to confirm every 'strict constructionist' judge … appointed by the various Republican presidents who have served during his tenure." And, she added, "Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America … consistently award him ratings of absolute zero on their scorecards."

THE RECORD, HOWEVER, doesn't seem to be enough to convince the electorate that McCain's votes honestly represent his beliefs. But, as I learned on a recent trip to Arizona, people who have known McCain for years confirm that when it comes to abortion, he's a true, if quiet, believer.

My first stop in Phoenix was the office of Grant Woods, who served as McCain's chief of staff during his first term in the House, helped with his campaigns throughout the 1980s, and is now a member of his Arizona Leadership Team. "I am very familiar with his position [on abortion]," reflected Woods, a cowboy-style lawyer, slow-talking and casual, who said that he embraces the true conservative position—that a woman should make her own decision rather than having the government make it for her. "It was one on which I disagreed with him from the beginning." Like many voters today, Woods said he "wondered about the depth of [McCain's] commitment to that position initially because I had the impression that it wasn't something that he'd given a lot of thought to." But, over the years, he continued, "I was completely convinced that this was a very sincere position that he had thought through and arrived at." Woods recalled a number of conversations with McCain, including one "up in the mountains late at night," in which the lawyer suggested that reasonable minds could differ. "When we really explored it, it really came down [for] him to a sanctity-of-life question. … He did get very emotional one time we talked about it. He truly believed."

The next day, I headed down to Tucson and spent most of the day in the gracious, pink adobe-style Arizona Inn. In the antique-filled sitting room, Dennis DeConcini, who served eight years in the Senate with McCain and got caught, with McCain, in the Keating Five scandal, was holding court, dishing his dislike for his fellow senator to this reporter and, he said, to others who were coming later in the day. He talked about McCain's furious temper, his lack of friends in the Senate, and his unwillingness to go to bat for Arizona. He said that, knowing the candidate as well as he does, "I don't think he would be a good president." But, if there's anything remotely positive that the anti-abortion DeConcini would say about McCain, it's this: "I think he's pro-life because he just can't be anything else. I think he's there."

And so it went through McCain's Arizona associates. Freddy Hershberger, who ran Barry Goldwater's Tucson office and herself served in the state legislature as a pro-choice Republican in the '90s, told me that, when she once said something which suggested that McCain shared her views on abortion, "He immediately said that nothing could be further from the truth. … He all but smacked me down." Deb Gullett, who was McCain's chief of staff in the early '90s and was his top aide during the 2000 presidential campaign, is strongly pro-choice and a force for moderate Republicanism in Arizona. She believes McCain has a "fundamental pro-life position" and said that she never pushed him on the issue. "What would be the point of belaboring the discussion?"

Carolyn Gerster, an elderly but still practicing doctor who helped found Arizona Right to Life and the National Right to Life Committee, recalled meeting with McCain when he was first in the House. The meeting was supposed to last 30 minutes, but the pair spoke for two hours. She says McCain has always been available when she's asked for his time and cites his support for embryonic stem cell research and campaign finance reform as the only times he's disturbed his pro-life record. Another prominent anti-abortion activist, John Jakubczyk, gave me a copy of a 1982 Arizona Right to Life dinner program in which McCain placed an ad and showed me a folder thick with letters from McCain; he explained that the Arizona pro-life community endorsed McCain, during his first run for office, over other anti-abortion candidates because it thought he was most likely to win, because it trusted his pro-life views, and because it believed he would be effective in pursuing its agenda.

DESPITE ALL THIS evidence, McCain's anti-abortion fervor hasn't registered with the public—in no small part because, in addition to his waffling on choice in the 2000 campaign, he hardly sounds like a true believer on other reproductive-health-related issues. When pressed to speak about them, he often evinces stunning ignorance, a fact that helps reassure the moderate middle that he could not possibly be as conservative as his record suggests. In early July, for example, a reporter raised the issue of whether it was "unfair" that insurance companies cover Viagra but not birth control. His response was painful to watch: "I certainly do not want to discuss that issue," he said immediately. She then asked about his votes against legislation requiring insurance plans to cover prescription birth control, legislation the anti-contraception right strongly opposed. He rubbed his mouth, rolled his eyes, flexed his fingers, crossed his arms, and more, before admitting, "I don't know enough about it to give you an informed answer." Finally, he told the reporter that he did not recall how he voted. "It's something that I had not thought much about," he added.

At another press conference, when a journalist asked him whether he thought contraceptives help stop the spread of HIV, he paused—for much too long—then answered, "You've stumped me." The reporter asked whether U.S. taxpayer money should fund contraception to prevent AIDS in Africa. "I'm not very wise on it," McCain said. What about grants for sex education? A long pause, then, "Ahhh. I think I support the president's policy." And, when the reporter pressed again, he finally said (after a reported twelve-second pause), "I've never gotten into these issues before"—an odd statement, given that he has voted on legislation related to all of them.

Clearly, these were not the responses of a devoted social conservative. What's more, on a few notable occasions, McCain has outright defied the right wing.

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The most prominent of these was his ongoing support, throughout the '90s, of embryonic stem cell research, on which he believed Congress had to "act affirmatively to support research to save lives." People who know him say that his support was a response to watching his friend and mentor Representative Morris Udall suffer from Parkinson's and that he believed his position was entirely consistent with his pro-life view. His leadership on campaign finance reform also infuriated social conservatives, who feared they would lose lobbying power, though that clearly wasn't McCain's intention.

But the public should not be distracted by these deviations from right-wing orthodoxy. McCain may or may not truly understand the broader definition of "pro-life," which these days also includes opposition to traditional and emergency contraception, family-planning, euthanasia, and related federal funding both here and abroad. (Playing the bumbling fool and satisfying no one is certainly an easier escape than trying to satisfy all.) But, as on abortion, both data and anecdote show there is little latitude in his positions. He has voted to end the Title X family-planning program, which pays for everything from birth control to breast cancer screenings and which is a target for the right because the recipients of these dollars also tend to be clinics that offer contraception to unwed and underage women and that offer abortions. He has backed largely discredited abstinence-only education, voting in 1996 to take $75 million from the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant to establish such a program; ten years later, he voted against teen-pregnancy-prevention programs. He has supported parental notification laws governing not only abortion but contraception for teens, and, though he didn't want to talk to the press about it, he's voted against requiring insurance companies to cover birth control. In international family affairs, McCain has voted not only in favor of the global gag rule, but also to defund the United Nations group that provides family-planning services (not abortions) for poor women, and to spend a third of overseas HIV/AIDS prevention funds on abstinence education.

Moreover, say advocates, he is not open to dialogue. "Whether it's abortion care, birth control, or comprehensive sex education, McCain is not moderate or a maverick," says Donna Crane, policy director of NARAL Pro-Choice America and a key lobbyist on these questions. "We never ask—and we never hear pro-choice Republicans question—whether McCain will be with us on a vote. He's always on the wrong side."

Gloria Feldt says that, during her time in Arizona and later as president of the national Planned Parenthood Federation of America, her staff never tried to talk to McCain about abortion, but they did approach him about family-planning. He always refused to meet with them; he even refused to meet prominent Republicans on the Planned Parenthood board. "When I went to his D.C. office, I would be put into his waiting room forever and ever and ever, and eventually a staff person would come out and put me off, and finally I just gave up," Feldt recalls.

Sharlene Bozack was public affairs director for Planned Parenthood of Central and Northern Arizona between 1989 and 1995. One day, she came to D.C. for PPFA's annual day of lobbying and encountered McCain on the Hill. "I relive it every time I see the man on TV," she told me over the phone from Phoenix. She and Feldt had run into McCain, introduced themselves, and asked if they could speak with him. He agreed, and they got on the train that runs between Capitol buildings. Bozack was talking to him about international contraception access. Suddenly, she recalls, he was no longer calm, cool, and collected. "He turned toward me and put his index finger out and started pounding me in the chest saying, 'You know my position on this,' and 'How dare you ask me about this,' and 'You are just trying to intimidate me.'"

So as not to alienate the Clinton middle—and perhaps in order to keep his foot out of his mouth—McCain has not voluntarily spoken on the campaign trail about many issues dear to social conservatives. (The McCain campaign did not respond to repeated requests for comment for this story.) Instead, he has used one issue—judicial nominations—as his proxy. In a May campaign speech at Wake Forest University, McCain slammed "judicial activism"—a common barb among social conservatives—and promised to restore "humility" to the federal courts and to nominate Supreme Court justices in the mold of Samuel Alito and John Roberts.

McCain also created a 48-person Justice Advisory Committee that would, in theory, help a President McCain select nominees to the federal and Supreme courts. That committee features a host of legal minds from the Reagan, Bush 41, and Bush 43 administrations. Its headline names include senators Sam Brownback, Jon Kyl, and Trent Lott, all of whom have thoroughly pro-life pedigrees. Other members include William Barr, who wrote a Department of Justice opinion in 1992 opposing the Freedom of Choice Act on both anti-abortion and federalist grounds; Charles Cooper, who under Reagan headed the Office of Legal Counsel, where he helped draft regulations that would prevent family-planning clinics that take federal funds from providing abortion counseling; Charles Fried, solicitor general under Reagan, who helped write a lengthy administration brief in *Thornburgh* v. ACOG that made the case for overturning *Roe* on anti-abortion and states-rights grounds; and Thomas Merrill, who was U.S. deputy solicitor general and co-author of the Reagan administration's amicus brief in *Webster* v. *Reproductive Health Services* asking the Court to overturn *Roe*. No member of the committee who has been active on reproductive health issues represents a pro-choice or even a moderately pro-life position.

It is clear that McCain is taking no chances with the right this time around. The question is whether pro-choice voters are going to take a chance on McCain. "No matter where he might have been," says Planned Parenthood's Richards, "it's pretty clear where he is now." And what is pretty clear now is not half as clear as it would become were he elected president. ◆

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The End of Aviation

What will happen when America can't afford to fly?

BRADFORD PLUMER

As the age of cheap oil comes to a close, it's springtime for gloomy futurists. Visions of a brutish world marked by violent squabbles over dwindling reserves, of junkyards littered with abandoned cars, of suburban slums overrun by weeds, of the collapse of industrial agriculture—none of this sounds as outlandish as it once did. Still, most of these horror stories are likely overstated: Energy experts tend to agree that, with a little ingenuity and a generous helping of political will, we could transition away from fossil fuels without being forced to give up our modern lifestyles.

But there's one big exception—an area where a post-carbon world really could mean a radical shift in the way we live. That's the world of commercial flight.

Early signs of an aviation apocalypse are already upon us. As oil prices flirt with $130 per barrel and the dollar struggles, airlines are paying nearly 80 percent more for fuel than they did a year ago. Twenty-five airlines have gone belly-up this year—three to four times the usual yearly rate. Major carriers like American, Northwest, and United, still reeling from the industry downturn after September 11, go barely a month without announcing layoffs and capacity cuts.

And it gets worse from there. Despite recent fluctuations, a growing number of economists are bracing for oil to hit or surpass $200 per barrel in a few years, and most industry analysts agree with Douglas Runte, of RBS Greenwich Capital, who told *The Wall Street Journal* in June, "Many airline business models cease to work at $135-a-barrel oil prices." After all, most airlines barely figured out how to be profitable in a world of *low* fuel costs. Jeff Rubin, chief economist of Canadian investment bank CIBC World Markets, has predicted that gasoline will hit $7 per gallon by 2010, forcing some 10 million cars in the United States off the road. If that happens, he told me, "You're going to see an even bigger exit in the airline industry."

As if one plague wasn't enough, the threat of climate change could mean further doom for airlines. In Great Britain, green groups are lobbying hard in favor of aviation fuel taxes and against a proposed third runway at Heathrow Airport, while activist groups, like one called Plane Stupid, have taken to unfurling banners from atop Westminster Palace and elsewhere with slogans like WE FLY, WE DIE. They argue that, at a time when greenhouse gases are pushing global temperature to perilous levels, flying—one of the most energy-intensive forms of travel around—is a luxury the planet simply can't afford. (While aviation currently accounts for just 3 percent of man-made carbon-dioxide emissions, it's one of the fastest-growing sources, and the true climate impact of flight is around 2.7 times that of carbon dioxide alone, thanks to the added warming effects of nitrous-dioxide emissions and jet contrails.)

As a result of this advocacy, a social stigma against flying is slowly spreading across Europe. While air travel isn't covered by the Kyoto Protocol, the next round of climate-treaty talks will likely address the issue, and the EU has recently announced that it will bring aviation into its emissions-trading regime—forcing airlines to pay for 15 percent of their carbon use starting in 2012. "That's the real deal," says Bill Swelbar, a research engineer at MIT's International Center for Air Transportation. "When you look at some of the taxes and fees being discussed in Europe, we might as well bankrupt our industry today." John Whitelegg, a transportation expert at York University's Stockholm Environment Institute, estimates that requiring airlines to pay the full environmental costs of flight could raise fares as much as five-fold.

Few of the analysts I interviewed wanted to venture predictions about aviation's end of days. One far-reaching scenario, however, was put forward by Anthony Perl and Richard Gilbert, two Canadian transportation experts who, in their new book *Transport Revolutions*, envision a world in which rising oil prices have reduced domestic flying in the United States roughly 40 percent by 2025—even assuming that airlines improve fuel efficiency by about 50 percent. In such a scenario, the United States could go from having nearly 400 primary airports down to 50 or so; instead of dozens of flights each day between New York and San Francisco carrying 200 people apiece, there might be only a handful carrying 800 or more in new extra-jumbo jets.

The Federal Aviation Administration, for its part, remains bullish on flight, predicting that U.S. airlines will carry 1.3 billion passengers by 2025, nearly double the current number. But even the FAA is starting to soften its outlook, since, already this year, fares in the United States have risen nearly 15 percent on average and some 2.7 million fewer people are expected to fly this summer than last. American Airlines has announced a 12 percent cut in domestic capacity for the rest of the year; United Airlines, a 16 percent cut. Regional jets—smaller planes carrying fewer than 50 passengers that account for one-fourth of all flights today—are being grounded en masse. In the short term, cuts may prove healthy for many airlines, letting them scale back to profitable core markets. But, if oil prices do soar past $200 per barrel, major carriers could start downsizing sharply, abandoning more routes and smaller hubs, and even going out of business for good.

Maybe the gloomy futurists have a point after all, and mass aviation could be coming to an end. No longer would air travel be like the Internet or television—a cheap technology available to virtually anyone, shaping our world in countless little ways. If that happened, the result would mean more than just the end of easy weekend jaunts to Bermuda or annual Christmas visits home. It could mean major shifts in the economy, changes in immigration patterns across the world, and perhaps even a remapping of the planet as we know it.

In the 1950s, flying was a special event: You could hardly find a ticket from New York to Europe for less than $5,000; men put on suits, women wore hats and heels, and some of the luxury planes, like Pan Am's Clipper, had bridal suites, dining salons, and beds. But, in the late '70s, under pressure from consumer groups and business interests, Congress

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deregulated the industry, allowing upstarts to open up new routes more easily and compete on price, ushering in the modern age of mass aviation. Between 1975 and 2005, inflation-adjusted airfares in the United States plunged some 40 percent, while the annual number of passengers more than tripled. A similar shift swept across the Europe in the '90s, as deregulation gave rise to popular "no-frills" carriers like Ryanair and Easyjet. By 2001, *The Atlantic Monthly* was envisioning a dawning age of "air taxis"—small planes that would make flight as quotidian as hailing a cab.

Deregulation had its costs: Airlines ditched amenities and service to offer rock-bottom fares; congestion and delays plagued travelers; and the industry itself became tempestuous for individual companies and their workers. Yet these seemed like minor sacrifices for the democratization of flight, as middle-class travelers were able to visit places once accessible only by books. Attractions changed: Small museums and historic sites tucked away on interstates began to collect dust, while popular hotspots like Cancún and Waikiki became choked with tourists.

Other sociological changes wrought by cheap air travel have also been striking. Since 1980, the number of international migrants has doubled to nearly 200 million, as skilled workers and low-wage immigrants alike, knowing they could affordably return home, became more willing to set off for foreign shores. Within Europe, low-budget airlines like the Hungarian carrier Wizz Air will transport Poles and Hungarians to Western Europe for as low as $26, which has enabled a surge of Eastern European migrant workers into the United Kingdom—most of whom stay for less than three months, according to a recent study by the Institute for Public Policy Research in London. "You'll have, for instance, a Polish doctor who spends most of his time in Poland but commutes to Scotland for a long weekend shift when most Scottish doctors aren't working," says Danny Sriskandarajah, who co-authored the report. "That would've been unheard of five years ago."

In large countries such as the United States, cheap airfare has helped facilitate the geographic dispersion of families and businesses alike. In the 1980s, some onlookers predicted that these trends would spell the demise of large urban centers. That never happened—there are still advantages to agglomeration—but new patterns did emerge. Academics took it for granted that they could toss around ideas with far-flung colleagues at conferences. Trade shows and conventions attracting millions changed the way business was conducted. For a growing subset of college grads, traveling abroad became a way of "finding themselves" before settling down. Long-distance relationships became commonplace—one recent survey in Europe found that three million Brits were looking for love abroad rather than at home, as flying to the continent for dates was just as cheap as taking trains around Britain. Of course, there was a dark side, too: Democratic air travel created new opportunities for terrorism and, as the 2003 SARS epidemic made clear, new pathways for the rapid spread of disease.

More important, if less evident, was the air-freight revolution of the 1980s, as companies like Federal Express bought up planes and transformed logistics and shipping in the United States, creating a system that sped up deliveries, gave the economy vast new flexibility, and fueled the rise of Internet distributors like Amazon and eBay. Air freight now plays a huge role globally, carrying, for instance, one-third of the value of all U.S. imports. And the system relies heavily on cheap fuel: Every night, FedEx keeps a number of empty planes up in the air, to better respond to requests at a moment's notice.

Airports themselves, rapidly expanding both in number and size, have become engines of urban growth. At the extreme end sits Brasília, which was not only conceived in the 1950s as both a capital and a major air hub, but had its first building materials flown in by air and was designed to look like an airplane from above. But airport-driven development is increasingly common in the United States, as well: John Kasarda, a University of North Carolina business professor, has coined the term "aerotropolis" to describe the mini-cities that have grown up around airports, bringing in first hotels for business travelers, then office parks packed with pharmaceutical and tech companies that need to ship out their products quickly. In the '80s, Dallas–Fort Worth's status as a major air hub brought in hundreds of thousands of distribution and manufacturing jobs, along with a conglomeration of high-tech firms that now rivals Silicon Valley.

Even in the most pessimistic scenarios, the social changes wrought by cheap airfares are not going to run perfectly in reverse, like the bombing of Dresden in *Slaughterhouse Five*. Kasarda, for instance, is skeptical that even large increases in fuel prices will mean the end of aerotropolises, which have become largely self-sustaining. But what *if* a hefty decline in air travel is upon us? What would that mean?

To start with, flight may become once again largely confined to a more elite jet-setting class. The rest of us may have to vacation closer to home: Even the relatively modest 30 percent dip in air travel after September 11 proved a boon to old-fashioned local attractions like the Texas State Fair and the Bronx Zoo. And many people may think twice about relocating a flight away from family members. "It will involve a shift in people's decisions of whether they have to move," says Vered Amit, a professor of anthropology at Concordia College who studies transnational mobility. "If people are separated for longer, don't see each other as often, it's going to hurt."

Immigration, meanwhile, did not begin with the birth of Easyjet, but some migration flows could cool off—the 465,000 Poles who have flown off on low-cost carriers to work in the United Kingdom since 2004, for instance, or the 70,000 Filipinos who migrate to the United States each year, or the Caribbean workers, skilled and unskilled alike, who fly frequently up to North America, often maintaining homes in both places.

As for the economy, no doubt a number of business fliers—who account for roughly one-third of all air travelers—will start teleconferencing instead. (Those who do still fly will enjoy the drops in both congestion and delays that come with capacity cuts.) Air freight could be harder hit, which may mean, among other things, that Americans can no longer walk into a Whole Foods in January and find blueberries flown 12,000 miles from Tasmania. During the early '90s, local produce distributors were heralding the fact that air freight had nearly quadrupled the number of items available in U.S. supermarkets. Perhaps not for much longer.

As people stop crossing the globe so frequently, the landscape will change, too. Popular tourist resorts accessible mainly by air, like Orlando and Las Vegas, could decline—much as, ironically, Atlantic City did in the latter half of the twentieth century, when air travel made it easier for East Coasters to fly off and gamble in the Nevada desert. The entire state of Alaska—whose denizens have been called "the flyingest people under the American flag"—would be dramatically altered if the small planes dotting the small airports and frozen

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lakes across the state could no longer afford to fly quite so often.

Dismal fates could await areas with high per capita concentrations of airport employment, such as Dallas–Fort Worth, Miami, and Tucson. Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, points out that some California cities like Fresno have managed to attract business by promising easy air access from L.A. in precisely the sort of regional jets that are now endangered. And what about the airports themselves—which, as the greens engaged in pitched battles at Heathrow remind us, were often financed based on projections of near-infinite growth and $60-per-barrel oil? Will many of them become, as one industry analyst quipped to me, "half-empty mausoleums"?

Small towns will be especially vulnerable to losing scheduled air service. That's already happened to nearly 30 U.S. cities in the past year, from Wilmington, Delaware (population 72,000) to Boulder City, Nevada (14,000). Hagerstown, Maryland, lost all commercial air service recently, rendering its new $61.8 million, 7,000-foot runway useless. Some of the towns in danger—like Manessa, New York, nestled along the Canadian border—lie nowhere near four-lane highways and have been connected to the outside world primarily by airplanes, which they rely on to bring in business clients or take residents to medical centers. One local official in northern Wisconsin recently offered to *Milwaukee Magazine* a theory on the influx of new residents who don't mind the harsh winters: "They know they're not stuck here. They can fly out for a month or two."

For now, the federal government picks up a large part of the tab for flights to roughly 140 smaller communities with its Essential Air Service Program, which costs $110 million per year and provides subsidies as large as $1,300 per passenger. As fuel prices rise, Congress will have to decide if it wants to directly bankroll ever larger portions of the air network.

Meanwhile, even worse troubles might afflict the developing world, where the global tourism industry brought in $205 billion in 2005; many poorer countries, like those in the Caribbean, have tourism-based economies that depend on cheap air travel. True, there are parts of the world under heavy environmental strain from stampeding tourists—the Galápagos Islands were recently added to UNESCO's "danger list." But a decline in flight-based tourism could also hurt local ecologies as governments, seeking to replace lost tourist cash, raid their own natural resources: In Ethiopia, for instance, Germany recently funded an eco-tourism project to forestall illegal logging in the Bale Mountains.

Is there a way to avoid this fate? I reached Richard Gilbert, one of the analysts warning of a potentially drastic decline in U.S. air travel over the next two decades, as he was returning from a meeting in Toronto with the U.S. Transportation Research Board, a government research body. I asked him what sort of response he gets when he discusses his book with industry insiders. "You see three arguments," Gilbert told me. "One is that ingenuity, American or otherwise, will overcome the problem in terms of oil prices. The second is that we'll wrestle it to the ground with technology. And the third type of response—and this one doesn't have a specific argument—is that this just *can't* happen."

It's always dangerous to bet against human ingenuity. But, while most of the technology needed to replace gas-guzzling cars with, say, plug-in hybrids either exists or sits just over the horizon, decarbonizing air travel is a much harder prospect, not least because of the massive amounts of energy needed to lift a large passenger plane in the air. The industry has already boosted the fuel efficiency of jets 70 percent in the last four decades, and is now left sanding down the rough spots—tinkering with ultralight materials, flying more slowly, or even charging passengers for extra bags. Propeller planes use less fuel than jets but are only really viable for some short-haul flights. Engine manufacturers say that more advanced technologies like fuel cells and carbon capture are still technically infeasible, while "blended wing" designs—planes shaped like stealth bombers to reduce drag—have barely left the drawing board. Improvements in air-traffic control will reduce both the length of flights and fuel-wasting delays, but may not be enough to surmount $200-per-barrel oil.

Virgin Airlines CEO Richard Branson has held out high hopes for jet biofuels, though spikes in food prices and massive deforestation have dimmed ethanol's star. Someday we may get solar-powered jets or hydrogen fuel cells, but, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in its landmark 1999 aviation study, "There would not appear to be any practical alternatives to kerosene-based fuels for commercial jet aircraft for the next several decades." The military may be one exception: The Pentagon, worried about peak oil scenarios, has pushed to fuel its Air Force with liquefied coal, which may keep fighter jets aloft, but would have horrifying climate consequences if used on a broad scale.

That means, in the next few decades, high-speed trains–which require considerably less energy per passenger than airplanes—may prove the most viable alternative to flight. York University's Whitelegg notes that, in Europe, trips shorter than 300 miles make up about 45 percent of all flights; most could be traversed nearly as quickly by train, if the proper infrastructure were built. Hank Dittmar, CEO of the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, sees airports morphing into "travelports" that seamlessly link rail and air networks, with the latter used largely for long-distance.

Trains, of course, can't span oceans. Perhaps the most unlikely alternative to emerge in recent months is the rebirth of the dirigible or airship, as companies have already been unveiling new designs for niche tourist trips and transporting cargo. The good news is that modern helium airships are far safer than the *Hindenburg* and emit a great deal less carbon than jumbo jets. The bad news is that natural reserves of helium may be running low and, more to the point, airships can't carry many people at a time, don't handle heavy weather well, and are quite slow: A flight from New York to London would take around 40 hours. (Fast passenger ships would take twice as long, though modern ocean liners suffer in peak oil scenarios, too.)

In an age when American consultants can commute weekly by air and return home to their spouses on the weekends, or when Manchester United soccer fans think nothing of hopping on a flight to follow their team for a quick game in Turin, it's almost impossible to imagine a world in which employers gave workers, say, three weeks off so that they could board a modern-day zeppelin and float home for the holidays. As even George Monbiot, the British environmentalist who has thundered most furiously about the need to downsize air travel in order to stave off drastic climate change, concedes, abandoning the age of mass aviation would be a hugely disorienting change. "It flies in the face of everything we have been encouraged to regard as progress," he has written. But the end of oil, or the urgency of global warming, or both, could well force that change upon us. Is that something our world, increasingly accustomed to its frenetic, globe-trotting pace, could handle? ◆

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

ASSORTED GIFTS

On August 7, 1974, a man walked across a tightrope stretched between the roofs of two Manhattan skyscrapers. The buildings were the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The funambulist was a Frenchman named Philippe Petit, to whom the feat was much more than daredevilry.

Man on Wire tells us how Petit came to do what he did and what it meant to him. The buildings had figured in his mind since he was a teenager. Early footage shows us the young Petit practicing on a low tightrope in the garden of his home in France, helped and encouraged by friends who stuck with him all the way. He tells us that when he saw the first newspaper stories about the projected construction of the World Trade Center—he was seventeen—he knew what his life must dream toward. Peculiar though this dream seems at first, Petit makes it so possessive that attention must be paid.

Today, as he speaks to us, he is very much the person he is in the early footage—movingly articulate (in English), vibrant, certain. Just by the way he talks about what he did, he changes this picture from the tale of a circus performer to an achievement of the spirit. Not many will share his view immediately; but he soon makes us believe that, far from show biz, his action was for him a move toward the metaphysical, a communion with space that no aviator or astronaut, dependent on machines, could ever know. We find ourselves surprised by our empathy with him and our understanding of his drive, and our surprise becomes part of the film's rewards.

Petit prepared for the walk with, among others, two walks that we see. He negotiated a wire stretched between the two towers of Notre Dame, and another stretched between towers of an immense bridge in Sydney, Australia. These were as much preparations of the spirit as of the body. From youth onward, he had the support of his girlfriend and of two male friends, all keenly intelligent, who are interviewed throughout the picture and who contribute to its texture. (Oddly, no one ever mentions the two subsequent attacks on the towers, although a clip of Ground Zero is inserted early.) There is no explanation of financing. Everything that Petit did must have cost money—for equipment, travel, helpers. We get no hint of how it was all paid for. (He had at least one other vocation, street clowning and juggling in Paris, which we glimpse, but it hardly answers the money question.)

Another question, about the term "documentary." Ever since such films were first made, some of them have been more than strict records of fact. Lumière's *La Sortie des usines* (1895) was shot more than once until it suited the director. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) had some rehearsed bits. James Marsh, the director of Petit's film, clearly assumes we will understand that the interviews and the high-wire moments are factual, but that, for example, the shots of Petit and friends sneaking into the World Trade Center the night before the walk and the close-ups of the girlfriend watching Petit up there were made for the film. So was the archery. The crucial wire was put in place between the towers by means of an arrow shot from one tower to the other: a string was attached to the arrow, a rope to the string, and so on.

The picture's weakest moment was meant to be funny. After Petit came down from the wire, he says, a strange girl threw her arms around him and persuaded him to accompany her back to her place. Then we get a fast-motion film of their sex, a sequence questionable only for its relevance. The best humorous moment is musical: as Petit steps out on the wire, we hear one of Satie's *Gymnopédies*.

He spent forty-five minutes there. The viewer's heart thumps—almost proudly—when Petit actually lies down in the middle of that wire, 1,350 feet in the air. The wire is transmuted into Chaplin territory when Petit sees the police waiting for him on the second roof and retreats teasingly to the middle. (Later there were some light legal charges, which were lightly taken care of.) But what we are left with at the last is not physical thrills but an extension of imagination and romance. George Mallory famously said that he had to climb Mount Everest because it was there. For Philippe Petit, enthralled and exalted, the sky was there.

MAN ON WIRE
Magnolia

FROZEN RIVER
Sony Pictures Classics

A GIRL CUT IN TWO
IFC

Yet another cinema term has become rubbery. "Independent film" can suggest an enterprise that was patched together as well as limited resources made possible, and this is indeed true of many good ones. But it is not always the case. *Frozen River* is an independent film, made (as far as I know) free of corporate control, and it is technically outstanding. It is a good deal more than that, but, to begin with, we need not

ANTHONY RUSSO

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concede that the film-maker was doing her best in straitened circumstances.

Frozen River was written and directed by a young woman named Courtney Hunt, her first feature. She says, "I wrote this film after learning about [American] woman smugglers at the border of New York state and Canada who drive their cars across the frozen St. Lawrence River to make money to support their kids." But that was only the basic situation: Hunt is too good to be content with exposé or revelation. For a start, she has done wonderfully in the integration of people and place. The frozen river is the first shot. The beings and actions and habits of the people we see become the behavior of creatures along that river. Very soon we can smell the wool of their jackets.

Reed Morano, the cinematographer, has a subtle sense of light. Every tone, from the bright to the virtually black, is handily in his chromatic scale. Hunt has had Morano's help in keeping every shot either the rightly inevitable one for that moment or a variation of the expected that freshens—sometimes beautifies—the moment. We quickly sense that the director of this film has unusual perception, and that whatever the story and performances turn out to be, she will make the most of them.

The story is in fact not especially deep, but it nonetheless holds because of its telling. Ray is a woman in her forties whose husband has run out and left her with two sons, ages fifteen and five. She has a part-time job in a shop, but she is hard-pressed for money. A Mohawk woman called Lila—a Mohawk reservation is nearby—who also needs money for her children gets Ray involved in alien smuggling. They will be paid good money for stowing two people at a time in the trunk of Ray's car in Canada and bringing them across the river to New York. (When Ray, who drives, is fearful, Lila says that the cops won't bother her because she is white.) Money does come, and of course so do complications.

Our faith in the film, begun by its very making, is heightened by three performances. Misty Upham as Lila is both taciturn and eloquent in creating bitterness plus a grim bravado. The acting of Charlie McDermott as Ray's adolescent son is a tribute both to his talent and to Hunt's directing. But it is Melissa Leo who brings the picture fully to life. An experienced actress, lovely, sensitive, strong, Leo keeps verifying the film every moment that she is on screen. More of her, please, and of Hunt's exceptional directing.

Claude Chabrol is at the opposite end of the experience line from Hunt. Since 1958, this French director has been making films continually, almost continuously. His attitude has obviously not been one of perfectionism—polishing one work assiduously—but of plenitude. We can infer that he wants to be judged by his entire career, and so far he is doing well. To name just two early ones—*Landru* and *This Man Must Die*—is to see that Chabrol truly matters.

A Girl Cut in Two, his latest, is in familiar Chabrol territory: the violence, physical and otherwise, that erupts into silken lives. The picture begins with the arrival of a publisher at the luxe country home of her most successful novelist, Charles Saint-Denis, and his wife. Chabrol's skill is immediately manifest in the way he handles the opening exposition, facts that must be given to us: we get them through motion, as the characters stroll through several rooms to a pool, rather than through static gabble.

We then go to some publication-day events with Charles in nearby Lyon, in the course of which he meets Gabrielle, a weather girl on the local television station. Just as feelings lock between them, we meet Paul Gaudens, a rich cockerel, vain of his good looks and wealth, who is also attracted to Gabrielle. The center

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of the story (the screenplay is by Cécile Maistre and Chabrol) then shifts from Charles to Gabrielle, who is figuratively cut in two between the two men. (At the very end she is more literally "bisected" when—as Chabrol contrives it—she appears in a magician's act.) Her adventures with both men are troubled. Paul is arrogant even though he is in love; Charles takes her without her foreknowledge to a plush bordello for an (unseen) orgy. Apparently Gabrielle agrees because she wants to seem at ease in this high-level world to which she has been admitted, but the experience registers.

Chabrol maintains his familiar character perspective. He doesn't so much photograph his people as view them. His camera usually seems to have a slightly cynical lens in it. "What a curious thing to do," it seems to comment wryly on this or that. "On the other hand, how predictable."

The result here is a comedy that makes us feel somewhat sophisticated. It would be even more comic if his principal actors were a bit better. Benoît Magimel has the looks and the air for Paul—though this rich young man seems to have only one jacket—but he slips into mannerisms. François Berléand is quite acceptable as Charles until we consider what Philippe Noiret or Jean Rochefort would have done with the part. Ludivine Sagnier, good enough as Gabrielle, is not quite the charmer that everyone in her television station raves about.

Yet, as is nearly always the case with Chabrol, a special pleasure pervades the picture. The English critic John Russell Taylor once said, as I've noted before, that it is difficult to deal with this director on paper "because so much of the overall effect turns on Chabrol's sheer hedonistic relish for the medium." How comforting to remember that Chabrol is busy, as he has been for fifty years, fashioning something new with his casual skill and intrusive imagination, which, whatever its flaws, will convey that relish. ◆

Sarah Williams Goldhagen on Architecture

REASON TO BE CHEERFUL

The Pritzker Architecture Prize is commonly described as "the Nobel Prize of architecture." It was indeed modeled on the Nobel, and its winners, like Nobel laureates, receive a bronze medal and a cash award. Yet the imputed equivalence between the two prizes is misleading. Alfred Nobel created his prize to reward specific and identifiable accomplishments that advance knowledge or create new lines of inquiry in a given field. (Leave aside the Peace Prize, which is a more complicated affair.) Nobel's written criteria for the prizes in physics, chemistry, and medicine recognize a person or persons for the most important "discovery or invention . . . or improvement" in their field, and in literature for "the most outstanding work in an ideal direction."

JEAN NOUVEL

The Pritzker Prize, by contrast, rewards an architect who has a significant body of built work, as opposed to theoretical projects (although exceptions to this requirement have been made). This work must demonstrate "talent, vision and commitment," and offer "consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment." The vague mandate that the winner make "significant contributions to humanity" is not the same as substantially advancing existing knowledge or navigating new paths, "ideal" or otherwise, in architecture, let alone making a specific discovery or a genre-bending accomplishment, as the Nobel laureates have done. And so the criteria for the Pritzker Prize (which is the creation of the Hyatt Foundation) can actually discourage the jury from evaluating the work of nominees according to the most important standards by which architecture should be judged. Does a project offer path-breaking design solutions to known problems? Does it make substantive technological, social, or artistic advances to practice? Does it profitably reformulate the boundaries of the discipline? Does it change the way we think about architecture?

Skipping the logical next step of scrutinizing the worthy and unworthy among past Pritzker winners, we can choose instead to dwell on a reason to be cheerful: this year the Pritzker committee got it right. It awarded its prize to Jean Nouvel, a sixty-three-year-old French architect based in Paris, who has more recently made headlines by winning a key approval from New York City's mercurial Landmarks Preservation Commission for a seventy-five-story skyscraper for the Museum of Modern Art, and by winning a major competition for a seventy-one-story mixed-use tower at La Défense, the business district on the outskirts of Paris. Nouvel, one of a handful of contemporary architects to be honored during his lifetime with a comprehensive, multivolume publication of his complete works (to be issued this fall by Taschen), runs a large international practice and has built many buildings: housing, theaters, and opera houses, office buildings and complexes, museums, shopping malls.

Some of these buildings are bad, some are merely fine. One example of the latter, which begins to reveal Nouvel's orientation as a designer and to explain the unevenness of his work, is his winning scheme for the Institut du Monde Arabe, the French government-sponsored institute for Arab culture. In the eyes of the world, it was with this building, which sits on a prominent site on the left bank of the Seine in downtown Paris, that Nouvel found his footing. One of François Mitterrand's *grands projets*, completed in 1987, the project's best-known feature is its south entrance, a lovely glass façade backed with a perforated metal screen that recalls the ornately geometric sunscreens common in traditional Arab palace architecture. Within a shiny steel grid of small square cells, metal diaphragms were designed to open and close like camera shutters, mechanically controlled by photosensitive machinery: diamonds morphing into octagonal stars, then hexagons, then circles and so on, apertures opening and closing in response to changing light.

This *mouchearabiens* façade is unique and visually attractive. Yet it is just a façade. Many of the building's rooms and circulation spaces are cramped and overly flashy. Its overall appeal is largely of the boys-with-toys kind—and, since shortly after the building's opening, the *mouchearabiens* have malfunctioned. No, the importance of the Institute du Monde Arabe lies in how it reveals its designer's strengths and weaknesses, showing them to be the same. Nouvel pursues the new. He experiments. When he was designing it, few of his colleagues talked about the importance of modulating natural light, which is now nearly a mandate for environmentally responsible design. To my knowledge, no one

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had tried to control daylight through photosensitive mechanical devices. The Institut du Monde Arabe is not a great building, but it does reveal a restless, searching mind.

Nouvel's commitment to experimentation has, in a handful of buildings, produced actual discoveries, inventions that create one of architecture's many possible "ideal directions." Among these are the Cartier Foundation headquarters in Paris, the Cultural and Congress Center in Lucerne, and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. In these three projects, as well as several others, he creates art from architecture, all the while elegantly articulating an original, innovative, and necessary agenda for architecture's future.

Cultural and Congress Center, Lucerne, 2000

COURTESY TASCHEN

To understand Nouvel's contribution, we must begin with the issues that most critically press upon the future of architecture, our cities, and the lives we live in them. They fall, I think, into three categories: political, social, and aesthetic. The political challenges facing architecture are many: the diminishing power of its practitioners to influence public opinion and, consequently, the physical configuration of our public realm; the need to develop new technologies—and to marshal existing ones—to create architecture that has direct political and social value: for disadvantaged people, temporary shelters, prefabricated dwellings, and low-cost housing; and for all people, buildings, urban designs, and infrastructural projects that in one way or another advance the causes of social justice and environmental responsibility. Socially, architecture and urban design must reformulate and contribute to supporting desirable patterns of societal interaction and familial structure. And aesthetically, architecture must move us, as great architecture always has, and make us see the world and its possibilities anew, and change how we think and live, individually and collectively.

Nouvel's contributions to architecture are primarily in the aesthetic and social realms. Aesthetically, for him, architecture constitutes a unique form of knowledge, which he aims to advance. He once remarked that he holds to an "aesthetics of revelation, a way of taking a piece of the world and saying, 'I'm appropriating this, and I'm giving it back to you for your appreciation in a different way.'" His particular aesthetic innovation lies in how he plays with our apprehension of buildings and their immediate surroundings, provoking us to reflect upon the shifting relationship between our optical experience of the world and our thoughts about it.

Nouvel does this by tackling the subject of matter. This is a stark contrast to his many modernist predecessors, who used newly developed materials and technologies to enlarge people's understanding of the dynamics of space. He has said that he is less interested in space than he is in "the relation between matter and light," adding that what especially intrigues him is the possibility of creating optical experiences that convey the empirical fact that light *is* matter. Unusually for a contemporary architect, Nouvel has been greatly influenced by contemporary art. His appreciation for artistic concerns has inspired him to pursue his aesthetic project by manipulating his users' perception of color, depth of field, transparency and opacity, materiality and apparent dematerialization. "I try to create a space that isn't legible," he once explained, "a space that works as a mental extension of sight." To provoke an architectural experience of productive reflection, he serves up spaces and places that "are there but might not be there."

The first executed project to encapsulate this aesthetic successfully was Nouvel's wonderful headquarters for the Cartier Foundation in Paris, which opened in 1994. Situated on the Boulevard Raspail and containing a historic "Tree of Liberty" planted by Chateaubriand, the Cartier Foundation sought a design that would include the venerated tree and avoid irritating neighbors hostile to the idea of a modern building on their historically important street. Nouvel captured his musings on transparency and perceptual complexity in a brilliantly vitreous solution. At times the building seems hardly to exist. His creation is a eight-story-high panegyric to the simple complexity of rectangular geometry and the responsiveness of glass to light. The often reflective, sometimes transparent façades change all day long, every day. They are gray and opaque when the sky is overcast; brilliant yellow and orange on clear days in the setting sun; a watery, transparent green at night.

Like giant breakable screens, the Cartier Foundation's entrance and rear façades extend to and above both sides of the enclosed building, paradoxically enhancing its monumentality while underscoring its fragility. Ceilings at the entrance level, containing mostly exhibition spaces, are a palatial twenty-six feet high. In the galleries, full-floor glass panels slide open to create a free flow from the sidewalk in front to the garden behind. Air or glass? It is not always clear. Inside the upper stories, Nouvel elaborates upon the theme of the changeable experiences of transparency, translucency, and reflectivity. Moving through this tall slip of a building, one sees its glass planes from multiple oblique and perpendicular angles, layered atop and shifting around one another. The Cartier Foundation embodies a thoroughly contemporary sensibility wrapped in a paradox: a building at once retiring and

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monumental, it is constantly remade by its immediate built and environmental context, by the time of day or night, the weather, the season, the shifting movements of its users and passersby.

This description of the Cartier Foundation may confer the impression that Nouvel is in the business of de-familiarization, in the old Russian formalist sense of the term. Such a notion might give pause: it is fine if a painting shocks people into seeing the world afresh, but people live in and use buildings. Should they really be unsettled by them? Some prominent contemporary architects, such as Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind, would probably say yes; but Nouvel disagrees. His buildings are emphatically not (to use Eisenman's ridiculous term) "autonomous." His work on perceptual experience inspires people to reconceptualize their relationship to the built object and the surrounding city. His buildings have concrete uses and familiar purposes; they make places for people to individually and collectively live their lives.

In the Cartier Foundation, and even more in two great buildings that followed it, the Cultural and Congress Center in Lucerne and the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Nouvel manages to make spaces that "are there but might not be there" without flying into self-indulgent fantasy, because his inquiry into the relationship of perception to cognition is coupled with an inquiry into the architectural use of figuration and allusion. If Nouvel's aesthetic musings on the nature of perception are intended to provoke private revelation, his re-thinking of the problem of architectural figuration emerges from his commitment to socially relevant architecture. In Lucerne and Minneapolis, Nouvel developed a new approach to the way a building should relate to its urban context, which might awkwardly, but accurately, be called transformative contextualism.

Falling

Long before daybreak
none of the birds yet awake
rain comes down with the sound
of a huge wind rushing
through the valley trees
it comes down around us
all at the same time
and beyond it there is nothing
it falls without hearing itself
without knowing
there is anyone here
without seeing where it is
or where it is going
like a moment of great
happiness of our own
that we cannot remember
coasting with the lights off

W. S. MERWIN

Questions of figuration and abstraction are much muddier in architecture than in art. A painting either depicts a figure or it does not; or, as in many abstract artworks since cubism, it suggests figurative elements while not actually depicting them. Yet the question of figuration in architecture is truly labyrinthine. Is a Doric column abstract or figurative? Is a façade composed of a sliding and skewed array of rectangles abstract or figurative? What if it deliberately alludes to compositions by Mondrian? What if those rectangles are actually windows, sometimes with people leaning out of them? That façade is an abstract composition of geometric forms, a figurative allusion to an abstract painting, and it contains actual or provokes imagined thoughts of real people. So is it abstract or figurative?

These questions may seem as relevant to architecture, or to life in the contemporary city, as puzzling out whether architects can dance on the heads of pins. Yet they have appeared prominently in the discourse of architecture for more than forty years. In reaction to the perceived abstraction and conceptual inaccessibility of some canonical early modernist buildings, architects were calling, by the 1960s, for a more "contextual" architecture that so-called ordinary people could grasp—buildings that looked like other buildings people had previously experienced and so would presumably feel comfortable being in and looking at. Historicism and contextualism, which come in many stripes, became the vogue, often under the name postmodernism, with its diverse practitioners arguing that architects should employ allusions (if not direct references) to the forms of familiar buildings, because doing so would give them a better chance of actually reaching their publics.

Nouvel's buildings in Lucerne and Minneapolis start within the parameters of this debate. Unlike some prominent Pritzker winners—Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Thom Mayne, Richard Rogers—Nouvel insists upon the importance of contextualism in architecture. But he rejects the mimicry of existing visual tropes, a practice most famously propounded by Robert Venturi (another Pritzker winner) and his partner, Denise Scott Brown (who was scandalously snubbed by the Pritzker committee). This practice of directly referring, or indirectly alluding, to established architectural styles is now practiced by a host of past winners, including Rem Koolhaas, Sverre Fehn, Raphael Moneo, Glenn Murcutt, and Alvaro Siza, as well as a large swath of prominent contemporary practitioners.

Nouvel has developed a singular approach to contextualizing architectural form that sets the stage for aesthetic and social transformation. To develop his designs, he carefully considers the role that the institution will play in the life of the city. He also studies the circumstances of its site—its history, its surrounding buildings, its topography, its place in the urban realm. In his best buildings, he synthesizes his vision of the particular institution's social role with his observations about its site and then proceeds with his composition. The result is a highly iconic architecture that rarely refers directly to actually existing buildings, past or present. Nouvel keeps his eye trained less on the history of architecture than on the particular cities and sites in which he builds. His buildings emphasize what he calls the "hyper-specificity" of their place. At the same time, he asks, "What good is an architecture that is out of step with contemporary life?" To genuflect before architectural precedents in today's globalizing, media-saturated, climatologically precarious, technology-driven world would be "absolutely ridiculous"; but simply to reflect today's world without trying to better it would be unconscionable.

The block-long lakefront Cultural and Congress Center in Lucerne, which was finished in 2000, brilliantly intertwines Nouvel's aesthetic inquiry into the nature of perception and his aesthetic and social reconceptualization of architectural form in what may be his greatest completed project, and is without doubt one of the most important buildings of our time. This huge complex (its gross area is 350,000 square feet) houses two concert halls, a small "convention hall," a museum, a restaurant, and a bar. Here Nouvel brilliantly amalgamates his manifold lines of architectural exploration. The Cultural and Congress Center encompasses conceptual, material, spatial, and emotional opposites. The building is monumental and inviting; conceptually driven and pragmatic; unique and contextual; figurative and abstract; opaque and transparent; light-absorbing

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and light-reflecting; compressed and expansive; brooding and celebratory.

Functionally and urbanistically, the Lucerne building encapsulates Nouvel's transformative contextualism. Faced with the prospect of crashing so many square feet into this small, historic, Swiss-precious city, Nouvel broke the program into three adjacent, linked, and differently sized components, each housing a public amenity: a large concert-hall-cum-restaurant, a small concert-hall-cum-bar and public gathering place, and a museum-cum-"convention hall." These components are housed in distinct rectangular prisms, separated at ground level by water channels that feed into reflecting pools in a front plaza, and above ground level by exterior pedestrian bridges. Ever mindful of how his buildings relate to their urban sites, Nouvel placed the three prisms according to their likely frequency of use: the large concert hall to the east is farthest from the center of the city; the museum and conference center to the west is closest to the city center and next to an entrance to the subway.

On the lakefront side, Nouvel unified this disaggregated composition, responding to the scale of the monumental, mirrored expanse of Lake Lucerne. He capped the building with an astonishing tapered slash of a roof that cantilevers seventy-five feet above the outdoor plaza and in some places stretches 150 feet out from the body of the building. From hundreds of meters away, in the city of Lucerne and outside it, what one sees of the Cultural and Congress Center is that tapered horizon line of a roof: depending upon where you stand, it can even appear to project over and encompass an adjacent historic building or two. Lined on its underside in matte gray aluminum, this roof works functionally and compositionally: in its hovering scope it has become the icon of the city; it helps to spatially define and functionally cover part of the outdoor plaza; and it ratifies the architecture's visual themes of mirroring, transparency, and opacity by reflecting the aqueous movements of the lake and the plaza's shallow pools.

Beneath the unifying element of the roof, Nouvel creates a funky contrapuntal rhythm, visually distinguishing the three prisms from one another but relating them materially and compositionally. Parts pick up on and extend the conceptual project of the Cartier Foundation, as in the main concert hall's ground-level façade of tinted, highly reflective glass, perpendicular to which are set a series of shallow vertical glass planes. This glass wall mirrors the city, but with a twist: visually, the added glass panels thicken the façade plane and increase the complexity of its reflected imagery; conceptually, they further emphasize to the viewer the shifting and fleeting nature of architectural perception. Standing in front of this wall, one despairs of identifying exactly what reflected parts of the city or the lake she beholds.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Further extending the inquiry that he began in the Cartier Foundation, Nouvel pushes his exploration into the nature of architectural perception beyond questions of transparency and reflection. Passages in lacy steel mesh and opaque, deep, reflective colors generate other perceptual and conceptual musings. Long thin corridors hang in blood-red boxes off one façade, playing off reflective glass and bright-blue enameled boxes housing rooms. These variations of texture and color also complicate the viewer's understanding of depth of field, while the differently articulated façade elements provoke him to imagine moving though spaces he cannot, from the outside, see or understand.

Inside, one moves through places that are dramatically dark and compressed (as in the deep red hallways leading to the concert hall), places that are dramatically light and open (as in the glass, steel mesh, skylit museum), and places that are dramatically both. Standing, during intermissions, in the concert hall's dark low-ceilinged foyer, you get the impression that the experience of this building in its site has been distilled to its pungent essence: the room is, on one side, compressed by an exterior portion of the bulbous, red-wood-veneered concert hall, and on the other side it is released into framed views over the lake and the city of Lucerne beyond.

Such moments in the Lucerne building testify to Nouvel's long-standing fascination with theater. This is no surprise from an architect preoccupied with how perceptions shift and transform situationally; and this fascination with perception prompted still more innovation in his enthralling Guthrie Theater, completed in 2006. In the Guthrie, Nouvel amalgamates his inquiries into the relationship between perception and architectural cognition, theatricality, and urban context into a brilliant, deep blue silo of a building perched high on a crest above the roaring St. Anthony Falls of the Mississippi River in an old industrial section of downtown Minneapolis.

In Paris and Lucerne, Nouvel achieved figuration by manipulating, reflecting, and framing his buildings' urban contexts. But both the Cartier Foundation and the Cultural and Congress Center are located in cities and on sites saturated with hundreds of years of history. Minneapolis is different. Compared to Paris or Lucerne, the city's architectural heritage is paltry. And the immediate urban context of the new Guthrie Theater is sorrier still. It is set on a former parking lot at what remains the outer edge of downtown; the neighborhood is filled mainly with abandoned industrial buildings and empty lots. This project demanded that Nouvel find a way to emphasize the historical identities of both Minneapolis and the Guthrie Theater, and so he adopted a more directly figurative approach. Compositionally and spatially, he took his cues from the institutional identity of the theater and from the site: the river, a nearby historic bridge, and a preserved flour mill next door that is a historic monument.

Screen-printed onto midnight-blue-enameled panels near the Guthrie's city-side entrance are huge ghostly images of faces, stills drawn from scenes of past performances. The building's large curved exterior volume, which houses one of the theaters, alludes to the adjacent grain silo and to Minneapolis's past as the "flour milling capital of the world." On the opposite side of the building, a cantilevered amber glass lobby four stories above ground level extends nearly 200 feet over a road toward the Mississippi River to offer variously framed and generally spectacular views of the river, the adjacent city of St. Paul, and the historic mill next door. Inside, as one moves through the various spaces, Nouvel reveals the theater as itself a sort of industrial machine for the production of illusions, of fabulations of personal identity. One catches mediated glimpses of the set building room and other production areas—some of any theater's many backstages.

The Guthrie is more figurative, in the traditional sense of the term, than the Cartier Foundation or the Lucerne buildings, but Nouvel manages to use this figuration to transform this institution in its urban place by creating a richer, more conceptually dense context. This is contextualism without a

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hint of nostalgia. Indeed, the Guthrie is utterly contemporary—at moments, even achingly cool.

The buildings in Paris, Lucerne, and Minneapolis confound our perceptions and provoke us to question how we process sensory experience, thereby expanding our vision of how personal experience is constructed. In offering a transformative contextualism, at once figurative and abstract, bound to the existing environment and forward-looking, these projects also constitute a cultural and social proposal to deal with another one of the contemporary world's most pressing concerns, namely globalization, by creating civic icons that distill a sense of locality and place. They move architecture beyond its deadening polarization of "context" and figuration on the one hand and "autonomy" and abstraction on the other. Thus these buildings address architecture to some of the most widely discussed questions in contemporary culture. Cerberus-like, Nouvel looks to the past, omnivorously consumes the present, and keeps watch on a future that he knows he is responsible for, and can partly shape.

Nouvel has completed one iconic skyscraper, the Torre Agbar in Barcelona, and is now turning his full attention to the problem of the tall building. He has two commissions in New York City, a condominium tower at 100 Eleventh Avenue and a tower next to the Museum of Modern Art in midtown. He has also begun work on his competition-winning scheme for a mixed-use tower at La Défense. An architect's design for a project is a declaration of intent, and it may vary wildly from what comes out of the ground. The designs for these projects, which are in different stages of development, look promising. Still, what Nouvel will accomplish in these new towers is an open question. The Torre Agbar and the design for 100 Eleventh Avenue, which is currently under construction, suggest that he will continue to explore the most advanced technologies in pursuit of his architectural ideals, and that he will increasingly consider the impact of such large buildings on the environment. It is time for Nouvel, like the great American architect Louis Sullivan before him, to reconsider the tall building. ◆

Richard A. Posner
IN DEFENSE OF LOOSENESS

The Supreme Court and gun control.

At the end of June, the Supreme Court, in a case called *District of Columbia* v. *Heller*, invalidated the District's ban on the private ownership of pistols. It did so in the name of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. The decision was the most noteworthy of the Court's recent term. It is questionable in both method and result, and it is evidence that the Supreme Court, in deciding constitutional cases, exercises a freewheeling discretion strongly flavored with ideology.

The majority opinion, by Justice Antonin Scalia, concluded that the original, and therefore the authoritative, meaning of the Second Amendment is that Americans are entitled to possess pistols (and perhaps other weapons) for the defense of their homes. Scalia's entire analysis rests on this interpretive method, which denies the legitimacy of flexible interpretation designed to adapt the Constitution (so far as the text permits) to current conditions. The irony is that the "originalist" method would have yielded the opposite result.

The Second Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights added to the original Constitution in 1791, states: "A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." In other words: since a militia, provided that it is well regulated, is a very good thing for a free state to have, the federal government must not be allowed to castrate it by forbidding the people of the United States to possess weapons. For then the militia would have no weapons, and an unarmed militia is an oxymoron.

Politically conscious Americans in the late eighteenth century feared standing armies, having fought the British army in the Revolution, and feared centralized government (as in Britain); and on both counts they wanted to make sure that the states would be allowed to have armed militias. The federal government could regulate them but not disarm them. The fear was that in the absence of such a provision in the Bill of Rights, the provision in Article I of the Constitution authorizing Congress to organize, arm, discipline, and call into service "the Militia" (a term that embraces the state militias, because the same provision reserves the right to train and officer "the Militia" to the respective states) would enable Congress to disarm them. That fear surfaced in the debates over the ratification of the original Constitution and was, as Justice John Paul Stevens's dissenting opinion explains, the motivation for the Second Amendment.

The text of the amendment, whether viewed alone or in light of the concerns that actuated its adoption, creates no right to the private possession of guns for hunting or other sport, or for the defense of person or property. It is doubtful that the amendment could even be thought to require that members of state militias be allowed to keep weapons in their homes, since that would reduce the militias' effectiveness. Suppose part of a state's militia was engaged in combat and needed additional weaponry. Would the militia's commander have to collect the weapons from the homes of militiamen who had not been mobilized, as opposed to obtaining them from a storage facility? Since the purpose of the Second Amendment, judging from its language and background, was to assure the effectiveness of state militias, an interpretation that undermined their effectiveness by preventing states from making efficient arrangements for the storage and distribution of military weapons would not make sense.

The Court evaded the issue in *Heller* by cutting loose the Second Amendment from any concern with state militias (the "National Guard," as they are now called). The majority opinion acknowledges that allowing people to keep guns in their homes cannot help the militias, because modern military weapons are not appropriate for home defense (most of them are too dangerous), and anyway the opinion says that the only weapons the Second Amendment entitles people to possess are ones that are not "highly unusual in society at large." Modern military weapons are highly unusual in society at large. By creating a privilege to own guns of no interest to a militia, the Court decoupled the amendment's two clauses.

It justified this decoupling by arguing that the word "people" in the expression "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms" (the amendment's second clause) must encompass more than just

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militiamen, because eighteenth-century militias enrolled only able-bodied free men—a mere subset of the people of the United States. But obviously the Framers did not mean to confer even a prima facie constitutional right to possess guns on slaves, criminals, lunatics, and children. The purpose of the first clause of the amendment, the militia clause, is to narrow the right that the second clause confers on the "people."

My analysis to this point has been "originalist"—and it has led to the opposite conclusion from that of the majority of the Supreme Court. It has been a narrow originalism, like that of Scalia's majority opinion, because it has ignored the interpretive conventions of the legal culture in which the Second Amendment was drafted and ratified. The reigning theory of legislative interpretation in the eighteenth century was loose (or flexible, or nonliteral) construction. This is explicit in William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, on which the majority opinion in *Heller* ironically relies. In the *Commentaries* we read that a medieval law of Bologna stating that "whoever drew blood in the streets should be punished with the utmost severity" should not be interpreted to make punishable a surgeon "who opened the vein of a person that fell down in the street with a fit." Blackstone explained that "the fairest and most rational method to interpret the will of the legislator, is by exploring his intentions at the time when the law was made, by signs the most natural and probable. And these signs are either the words, the context, the subject matter, the effects and consequence, or *the spirit and reason of the law*.... As to the effects and consequence, the rule is, where words bear either none, or a very absurd signification, if literally understood, *we must a little deviate from the received sense of them*" (emphasis added). John Marshall, the greatest Supreme Court justice of the generation that wrote the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, was also a loose constructionist.

Originalism without the interpretive theory that the Framers and the ratifiers of the Constitution expected the courts to use in construing constitutional provisions is faux originalism. True originalism licenses loose construction. And loose construction is especially appropriate for interpreting a constitutional provision ratified more than two centuries ago, dealing with a subject that has been transformed in the intervening period by social and technological change, including urbanization and a revolution in warfare and weaponry.

The Framers of the Bill of Rights could not have been thinking of the crime problem in the large crime-ridden metropolises of twenty-first-century America, and it is unlikely that they intended to freeze American government two centuries hence at their eighteenth-century level of understanding. Because of the difficulty of amending the Constitution, it has from the beginning been loosely construed so as not to become a straitjacket or a suicide pact. The older the constitutional provision and the more the environment has changed since enactment, the more appropriate is the method of loose construction.

There are few more antiquated constitutional provisions than the Second Amendment. For example, the Framers and the ratifiers of the amendment probably did think that the right of militiamen to keep and bear arms entitled them to keep their weapons in their homes. They were expected to provide the militia's muskets rather than receive them from a weapons depot. Back then, moreover, guns required a lot of upkeep. Without constant care, they would rust and the powder would become moist. Storing the guns at a warehouse would have left many of them inoperable. To use this "original" understanding to allow members of the National Guard to store military weapons (machine guns, grenades, Hummers, and so on) would be preposterous, and it is disclaimed in the majority opinion.

In these and other ways, the *Heller* decision is exposed as an example of loose construction—despite the Court's pretense of engaging in originalist interpretation (but again, an originalism stripped of the original understanding of how a constitutional provision should be interpreted). Just as when the Supreme Court, in 1947 in *Adamson* v. *California*, decided in the teeth of the language of the Fourteenth Amendment that the amendment "incorporates" the Bill of Rights, an exercise of judicial discretion is presented in *Heller* as historically determined. The Bill of Rights was added to the original Constitution to limit federal power. One provision of the Bill of Rights forbids government to deprive persons of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment contains an identical due process clause, but directed against state action. The Court in *Adamson* turned historical handsprings to interpret the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause as incorporating—that is, making applicable to state action—most of the other provisions of the Bill of Rights. If *Heller* is applied to the states, it will be on the authority of *Adamson*.

The true springs of the *Heller* decision must be sought elsewhere than in the majority's declared commitment to originalism. The idea behind the decision—it is not articulated, of course, and perhaps not even consciously held—may simply be that turnabout is fair play. Liberal judges have used loose construction to expand constitutional prohibitions beyond any reasonable construal of original meaning; and now it is the conservatives' turn. Another plausible example of payback is the conservative justices' expansive interpretation of the free-speech clause of the First Amendment to limit regulation of campaign financing.

It is possible that in both the gun-control case and the campaign-finance cases the justices in the majority, rather than playing tit for tat, thought the laws they were invalidating very dumb, and in the case of the District of Columbia's ban on possession of pistols thought the law wimpish and paternalistic, like requiring bikers to wear helmets. A law that bans possession of pistols outright may even be inferior, at least as a method of controlling crime, to a law that combines strict permit requirements with heavy penalties for violating them, or even to one that simply imposes draconian penalties on crimes committed with guns. But judges are not supposed to invalidate laws merely because, as legislators, they would have voted against them.

There is an important difference, obvious but often overlooked, between using loose construction to prevent making the Constitution a straitjacket and using it to make the Constitution a straitjacket. In *Kennedy* v. *Louisiana*, a decision handed down shortly before *Heller*, the Supreme Court held that to execute a person who rapes a child but does not kill her violates the cruel and unusual punishments clause of the Eighth Amendment. That was a loose construction that tied the hands of the states and the federal government, and Scalia and the other conservative justices dissented. But in *Heller* it was the liberal justices who were dissenting from a decision that ties the hands of the federal government, and of the states, too, if the Supreme Court decides that the Second Amendment constrains state as well as federal government action. Compare these two cases to the *Zelman* case, decided several years ago. There the Court upheld, against a challenge based on the clause of the First

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Amendment that forbids governmental establishments of religion, the funneling of public monies to private schools by means of vouchers that parents can use to pay for their kids' tuition. Most private schools are Catholic parochial schools. The interpretation of the establishment clause that permitted the use of public moneys to finance parochial schools rejected the imposition on government of a constitutional restraint that the liberal justices wanted to impose.

Another illuminating contrast to *Heller* is the recent *Kelo* decision. The Supreme Court held that the just compensation clause of the Fifth Amendment does not forbid a state to condemn private property and, having thus seized it, to turn it over to a private developer. The decision provoked outrage by conservatives, who oppose condemnation because it infringes rights of private property. They should not have been outraged. All the Court did was unshackle government from a potential constitutional constraint, and by doing so toss the issue into the political arena. And sure enough, in the wake of the decision a number of states, under pressure from property interests, curtailed their eminent domain powers.

Similarly, had the Supreme Court upheld the District of Columbia gun ordinance, it would not have been outlawing the private possession of guns. It would merely have been leaving the issue of gun control to the political process. The popularity of the decision and its prompt endorsement by both presidential candidates attests to the political power of the "gun lobby"; and an unpopular decision in favor of the government would actually have strengthened the lobby, just as *Roe* v. *Wade* strengthened the anti-abortion movement. The proper time for using loose construction to enlarge constitutional restrictions on government action is when the group seeking the enlargement does not have good access to the political process to protect its interests, as abortion advocates, like gun advocates, did and do.

Constitutional interpretations that relax rather than tighten the Constitution's grip on the legislative and executive branches of government are especially welcome when there are regional or local differences in relevant conditions or in public opinion. The failure to recognize this point (or perhaps indifference to it) was the mistake that the Supreme Court made when it nationalized abortion rights in *Roe* v. *Wade*. It would be the mistake the Court would be making in the unlikely event that it created a federal constitutional right of homosexual marriage. It is the mistake the Court has made in *Heller*. The differences in attitudes toward private ownership of pistols across regions of the country and, outside the South, between urban and rural areas, are profound (mirroring the national diversity of views about gay marriage, and gay rights in general, as well as about abortion rights). A uniform rule is neither necessary nor appropriate. Yet that is what the *Heller* decision will produce if its rule is held applicable to the states as well as to the District of Columbia and other federal enclaves.

Heller gives short shrift to the values of federalism, and to the related values of cultural diversity, local preference, and social experimentation. A majority of Americans support gun rights. But if the District of Columbia (or Chicago or New York) wants to ban guns, why should the views of a national majority control? Is that democracy, or is it Rousseau's forced conformity to the "general will"? True, a member of a national majority can be a member of a minority within a local area: gun buffs in Washington, D.C., for example. But a person who is a member of a local minority but a national majority can relocate to a part of the country in which the national majority rules. A resident of Washington can move to northern Virginia. This is not to say that there should be no national rights—that Mississippi should be permitted to stone adulterers, or Rhode Island to ban *The Da Vinci Code*. But the question of whether to nationalize an issue in the name of the Constitution calls for an exercise of judgment; and when the nation is deeply divided over an issue to which the Constitution does not speak with any clarity, and a uniform national policy would override differences in local conditions, nationalization may be premature.

There is a further difference between constitutional interpretations that permit government action and ones that forbid it: only the latter create new business for the federal courts. Conservatives rightly decry the enormous expansion in the federal caseload caused by the aggressive constitutional rulings of liberal justices in the 1960s. But if the new rule declared in *Heller* is applied to the states, we may see a similar result, this time engineered by conservatives; and we will have further confirmation that the Warren Court liberated conservative as well as liberal judges from the constraint of judicial modesty. Every time a gun permit is denied, the disappointed applicant will have a potential constitutional claim litigable in the federal courts.

Justice Scalia was emphatic that the right to possess a gun is not absolute. He sparred with Justice Stephen Breyer (who wrote a separate dissenting opinion) over the standard to be applied to restrictions on gun ownership. All that is clear is that an absolute ban on possessing a pistol is unconstitutional. The other restrictions that a government might want to impose are up for grabs. It may take many years for the dust to settle—many years of lawsuits that our litigious society does not need.

Conservatives rightly believe, moreover, that the efficacy of legally enforceable rights as an engine for social reform is overrated. The effects even of such well known and generally applauded decisions as those invalidating racial segregation of public schools and the malapportionment of state legislatures are uncertain, and may not have been, on balance, beneficial. The only certain effect of the *Heller* decision—for the scholarly literature has yet to

Dumb

Fleabane again and I have another year
to take up its redness and what the wayside is like
with or without it and I have another year
to charge across the wooden bridge and shake it
again and take on the animals and fight
the stupid bikes and the bikers who ride across
with their legs spread out instead of walking their bikes
so we didn't have to be pushed against the rails,
they are so dumb and their bikes have so many dumb
and useless gears like a dumb idiot box
with 2,000 stations, only dumb ancient
boxing and ancient movies worth anything,
Jack Johnson or Marciano, even
Orson Welles too much, give me the unself-
conscious, Karl Malden or Jean Harlow,
for this is an old flower, it hates whatever
it wants to, it grows where it wants and it
loves goats because of their flattened eyes.

GERALD STERN

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reach consensus on the effects of gun-control laws—will be to increase litigation over gun ownership.

I CANNOT DISCERN any principles in the pattern of the Supreme Court's constitutional interpretations. The absence of principles supports the hypothesis that ideology drives decision in cases in which liberal and conservative values collide. If loose construction produces a conservative limitation on government, most conservatives will support it and most liberals will oppose it; and if it produces a liberal limitation on government, most liberals and conservatives will switch sides. The qualification in "most" is important, though. Scalia has voted to invalidate, on free-speech grounds, laws forbidding the burning of the American flag. That is loose construction—decidedly non-originalist in the narrow sense of his opinion in *Heller*—because burning is not speech; and it is a loose construction that produces a liberal outcome. Breyer concurred in a decision that allowed the Ten Commandments to be exhibited on the grounds of the Texas Capitol; and that was a conservative vote (and the swing vote in the case) by a liberal justice.

Whatever generated these justices' uncharacteristic votes in those two cases, it was not a decision-making method that prevents the exercise of discretion. Both justices employ judicial methodologies that leave them with plenty of running room. In his dissent in the *Zelman* case, Breyer argued that the school voucher system was unconstitutional because there was a "risk" that it could create "a form of religiously based conflict potentially harmful to the Nation's social fabric." In his dissent in *Heller* he reversed the burden, arguing that the risk that allowing limited gun ownership in the District of Columbia would lead to more death and injury from guns was enough to uphold the District's gun law against constitutional challenge.

Since Stevens devoted most of his dissenting opinion in *Heller* to his own interpretation of the original meaning of the Second Amendment, observers may conclude that the entire Court has now embraced originalism as the canonical method of interpreting the Constitution. But this is not a plausible inference in light of the child-rapist case of just a few weeks earlier (non-murdering rapists of adult women were being executed in the United States as recently as the 1960s), from which Scalia dissented. One supposes that Stevens could not resist meeting the majority on its own ground, since the text and the history (both pre- and post-enactment) of the Second Amendment favor the dissent. Among other things, professional historians were on Stevens's side.

Still, his opinion seems to me too dogmatic (the historical evidence is not as one-sided as his opinion suggests); and it leaves the impression that all that divided the two wings of the Court was a disagreement over the historical record. That was playing into Scalia's hands. The majority (and the dissent as well) was engaged in what is derisively referred to—the derision is richly deserved—as "law office history." Lawyers are advocates for their clients, and judges are advocates for whichever side of the case they have decided to vote for. The judge sends his law clerks scurrying to the library and to the Web for bits and pieces of historical documentation. When the clerks are the numerous and able clerks of Supreme Court justices, enjoying the assistance of the capable staffs of the Supreme Court library and the Library of Congress, and when dozens and sometimes hundreds of amicus curiae briefs have been filed, many bulked out with the fruits of their authors' own law-office historiography, it is a simple matter, especially for a skillful rhetorician such as Scalia, to write a plausible historical defense of his position.

But it was not *so* simple in *Heller*, and Scalia and his staff labored mightily to produce a long opinion (the majority opinion is almost 25,000 words long) that would convince, or perhaps just overwhelm, the doubters. The range of historical references in the majority opinion is breathtaking, but it is not evidence of disinterested historical inquiry. It is evidence of the ability of well-staffed courts to produce snow jobs.

This is strikingly shown by the lengthy discussion of the history of interpretation of the Second Amendment. Scalia quotes a number of statements to the effect that the amendment guarantees a personal right to possess guns—but they are statements by lawyers or other advocates, including legislators and judges and law professors all tendentiously dabbling in history, rather than by disinterested historians: more law-office history, in other words. Sanford Levinson, a distinguished constitutional law professor, has candidly acknowledged that the most important reason for his support of a constitutional right of private possession of guns is that opposition to this right is harmful to the electoral prospects of the Democratic Party.

The statements that the majority opinion cited had little traction before *Heller*. For more than two centuries, the "right" to private possession of guns, supposedly created by the Second Amendment, had lain dormant. Constitutional rights often lie dormant, spectral subjects of theoretical speculation, until some change in the social environment creates a demand for their vivification and enforcement. But nothing has changed in the social environment to justify giving the Second Amendment a new life discontinuous with its old one: a new wine in a decidedly old wineskin. There is no greater urgency about allowing people to possess guns for self-defense or defense of property today than there was thirty years ago, when the prevalence of violent crime was greater, or for that matter one hundred years ago. Only the membership of the Supreme Court has changed.

If constitutional decisions are to be determined by the balance between liberals and conservatives on the Supreme Court, the fig-leafing that we find in *Heller*—the historicizing glaze on personal values and policy preferences—will continue to be irresistibly tempting to the justices, with their large and tireless staffs and their commitment to a mystique of "objective" interpretation. There is no way to purge political principles from constitutional decision-making, but they do not have to be liberal or conservative principles. A preference for judicial modesty—for less interference by the Supreme Court with the other branches of government—cannot be derived by some logical process from constitutional text or history. It would have to be imposed. It would be a discretionary choice by the justices. But judging from *Heller*, it would be a wise choice. It would go some distance toward de-politicizing the Supreme Court. It would lower the temperature of judicial confirmation hearings, widen the field of selection of justices, and enable the Supreme Court to attend to the many important non-constitutional issues that it is inclined to neglect. ◆

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Richard Just

THE TRUTH WILL NOT SET YOU FREE

Everything we know about Darfur, and everything we're not doing about it.

I.

In July 2004, a colleague beckoned Brian Steidle into his office and took out a laptop. "As he handed me his computer," writes Steidle in *The Devil Came on Horseback,* his memoir about Darfur, "a series of the most disturbing images I had ever seen came across the screen"—photographs of young girls who had been handcuffed and burned to death outside their school. Steidle, a former U.S. marine, was working as a peacekeeper in southern Sudan. His job was to monitor a cease-fire between the country's government and the rebels in the south—a cease-fire that had ended a decades-long civil war in which some two million people had died. But just as a tenuous peace was finally taking hold in the south, violence had broken out in Sudan's western corner—a dusty, impoverished region called Darfur. That was where the unbearable pictures had been taken. Steidle was stunned by what he saw on the laptop, and he assumed that others would be stunned, too. "If these photos were released to the public," he e-mailed home, "there would be troops in here in no time."

Four years later, the sentiment seems quaint. For we are awash in information about Darfur. Disturbing photos—now ubiquitous—of torture, death, and starvation are just the beginning of it. There are the regular dispatches of wire service reporters, the drumbeat of opinion columns, and the images beamed home by television cameras. There are more websites maintained by activists and human rights groups than anyone can count. And now there is something else, too: a substantial body of literature, academic and popular, about western Sudan. This was not always the case. Africa may be a continent full of forgotten corners, but until a few years ago not many were quite as forgotten as Darfur. I took an African history course in college, and when, in early 2006, I dug out my textbook (which carries the authoritative-sounding title *Africans: The History of a Continent*) and looked in the index, I found just four isolated mentions of Darfur. The region's colonial history merited less than a sentence: "Darfur in the Sudan and Ovamboland in northern Namibia were conquered during the First World War, the interior of British Somaliland in 1920." That was the extent of it.

I was, at the time, reading the first two books to trace the historical roots of the crisis—Gérard Prunier's *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide* and Alex de Waal and Julie Flint's *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*. Searching for something to which I might compare them, I visited the libraries of two large research universities. There I found many books about Sudan, but relatively few about Darfur. The Sudan books contained plenty of detail on the colonial-era exploits of British military men such as Charles Gordon and Horatio Kitchener, the political intrigue that had unfolded in Khartoum in the years since independence, and the decades of civil war between Sudan's northern and southern halves. But in many of those books, Darfur—which contains approximately 15 percent of Sudan's population and about 20 percent of its land mass—was mentioned only as an afterthought.

Today, by contrast, anybody going to a university library—or, for that matter, a Barnes & Noble—in search of information about Darfur would not have a hard time finding it. On the heels of those first two books has come an avalanche of published material about western Sudan—memoirs, journalistic accounts, histories. There is a book by a survivor of the genocide; memoirs by a nurse working for Doctors Without Borders, a top-ranking U.N. official, and an African Union peacekeeper; two collections of essays that narrate the events of the past few years—particularly the failed international effort to stop the killing—in painstaking detail; a book by three activists who snuck into Darfur in November 2004; an account that patiently traces the history of the region; a book that links the Darfur genocide to the decades-long war between Libya and Chad; and even a book—easily the oddest entry in this grim genre—co-authored by the actor Don Cheadle. (About his visit to a camp for Darfuri refugees, Cheadle writes: "Just then, I catch the eye of a little boy, no more than ten or eleven, staring at me tripping. I hope he didn't vibe my slippery state." As if evil will be defeated by cool.) And there are also the movies: documentaries that focus on the experiences of aid workers, activists, and of course the victims themselves—men and women whose faces and voices are captured in hour after hour of stomach-churning interviews, whose children have been murdered and communities destroyed, whose existence is now confined to squalid refugee camps from which they will probably never go home.

All this gives Darfur a morbid sort of distinction. No genocide has ever been so thoroughly documented while it was taking place. There were certainly no independent film-makers in Auschwitz in 1942, and the best-known Holocaust memoirs did not achieve a wide audience until years after the war. The world more or less looked the other way as genocide unfolded in Cambodia during the 1970s, and the slaughter in Rwanda happened so quickly—a mere hundred days—that by the time the public grasped the extent of the horror, the killing was done. But here is Darfur, whose torments are known to all. The sheer volume of historical, anthropological, and narrative detail available to the public about the genocide is staggering. In the case of the genocide in Darfur, ignorance has never been possible. But the genocide continues. We document what we do not stop. The truth does not set anybody free.

If these photos were released to the public, there would be troops in here in no time. That was Brian Steidle's hope—more, his expectation—in 2004. And his assumption—that if only Americans could see what was happening in Darfur, they would take the steps necessary to end the killing—was by no means a radical one. It is an assumption that is shared, in one form or another, by many who have commented on Darfur in recent years: by Daoud Hari, a refugee and translator from the persecuted Zaghawa tribe who, after fleeing his country, repeatedly took outlandish risks in order to shepherd Western writers back into the killing fields of Darfur, and who wrote a memoir of his experiences "because I know most people want others to have good lives, and, when they understand the situation, they will do what they can to steer the world back toward kindness";

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by Paul Rusesabagina, the real-life hero of *Hotel Rwanda*, who, in his preface to one of the Darfur books, implores readers, "Now that you know, what do you plan to do?"; and by the victims themselves, who, in film after film, look into the camera and relay their horrific stories, clearly hoping that their honesty will shake the world from its slumber.

The assumption is really quite simple: that knowledge will beget action. It is hardly unique to Darfur. (It is, among other things, one of the moral foundations of journalism. War correspondents, high school reporters investigating unsanitary conditions in the school cafeteria, and everyone in between—all are acting on the idea that injustice will be remedied if only it is exposed.) But Darfur has tested this assumption in the realm of genocide; and the results, now conclusive, give grounds for a measure of despair. The first part of Brian Steidle's wish was granted—the photos were released—but not the second part. The troops did not arrive. Or, to be more precise, not the troops Steidle was hoping for—not the troops that would have been capable of stopping the killing.

In the years after Steidle first saw those photos, peacekeepers would gradually trickle into Darfur under different mandates—first African Union troops, then United Nations forces. But their ranks have yet to grow beyond a paltry 9,000, and they have made little progress in stopping the destruction, let alone in reversing it by allowing millions of displaced Darfuris to begin returning to the land that was stolen from them almost overnight. While the killing and the ethnic cleansing no longer take place at the feverish pace at which they once did, the genocide continues to this day. The Sudanese military periodically bombs towns belonging to non-Arab tribes, forcing villagers to flee. The Janjaweed—Arab militias unleashed by the government to terrorize civilians—have not been disarmed, and they continue to rape and to kill. In the camps to which they are confined, the displaced still die of malnutrition and disease.

All the information—the dispatches, the websites, the columns, the books, the films—have not roused anybody with the power to stop this tragedy actually to stop it. In the documentary movie that he made to go along with *The Devil Came on Horseback*—which is the best written of the Darfur memoirs and the most politically astute—Steidle comes to grips with this crushing fact: "I honestly thought, as I wrote in an email home, that if the people of America could see what I've seen, there'd be troops here in one week.... Man, I am so naïve. Because that's not true at all. They've seen it now. And we've still done nothing."

THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK: BEARING WITNESS TO THE GENOCIDE IN DARFUR
By Brian Steidle and Gretchen Steidle Wallace
(PublicAffairs, 237 pp., $14.95)

WAR IN DARFUR AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE
Edited by Alex de Waal
(Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University and Justice Africa, 431 pp., $24.95)

DARFUR'S SORROW: A HISTORY OF DESTRUCTION AND GENOCIDE
By M. W. Daly
(Cambridge University Press, 368 pp., $22.99)

DARFUR: THE LONG ROAD TO DISASTER
By J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins
(Markus Wiener Publishers, 340 pp., $28.95)

THE TRANSLATOR: A TRIBESMAN'S MEMOIR OF DARFUR
By Daoud Hari, as told to Dennis Michael Burke and Megan M. McKenna
(Random House, 204 pp., $23)

HEART OF DARFUR
By Lisa French Blaker
(Hodder & Stoughton, 348 pp., $37.51)

DARFUR DIARIES: STORIES OF SURVIVAL
By Jen Marlowe with Aisha Bain and Adam Shapiro
(Nation Books, 259 pp., $15.95)

NOT ON OUR WATCH: THE MISSION TO END GENOCIDE IN DARFUR AND BEYOND
By Don Cheadle and John Prendergast
(Hyperion, 252 pp., $14.95)

A LONG DAY'S DYING: CRITICAL MOMENTS IN THE DARFUR GENOCIDE
By Eric Reeves
(The Key Publishing House, 360 pp., $37.99)

A BILLION LIVES: AN EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM THE FRONTLINES OF HUMANITY
By Jan Egeland
(Simon & Schuster, 253 pp., $27)

Steidle's role in Darfur as an unarmed "observer" was in many ways a perfect metaphor for the world's response. As he reports in his memoir, after he saw the pictures of the murdered schoolgirls, he requested a transfer from southern Sudan to Darfur, where he worked for the African Union during some of the worst months of the killing. His job was to monitor violations of one of the bogus cease-fires that the Sudanese government signed during the early days of the conflict—cease-fires that the government had no intention of honoring, but that provided an effective diplomatic cover under which the work of ethnic cleansing could continue. After a village had been attacked, almost always by the government or the Janjaweed, Steidle and his team would investigate, interviewing victims and photographing the destruction. With the information they gathered, they would write reports, which were sent to African Union headquarters in Ethiopia and then to the countries that were funding the observer mission. Their role was only to document, never to protect.

Toward the end of his tenure in Darfur, Steidle speaks to a Janjaweed commander who alleges that rebels have kidnapped members of his tribe and stolen cattle, taking them to non-Arab villages: "He announced ... that he would attack each village, kill all inhabitants, and burn the towns to the ground." After consulting maps, Steidle concludes that a village called Hamada will be first. He reports this prediction to his team's commander, a callous African Union official known as Colonel Mohammed, who brushes the warning aside. One week later, Steidle's colleagues return from a patrol looking "aghast." "A massacre had taken place at Hamada," Steidle writes. "Of the 450 villagers, 107 had been brutally tortured and murdered. Bodies were strewn along blood-soaked village paths. Infants had been crushed. Toddlers had their faces smashed in with rifle butts, their bodies tossed into the dirt. Deep gashes in a bloody tire bore witness to its use as a chopping block; beside it was an axe."

Steidle had known the killing was coming. Indeed, the person who perpetrated the killing had told Steidle exactly what he was going to do. Yet all Steidle could do was observe. On another occasion he finds himself circling a burning village in a helicopter when, from the sky, he spots two vehicles speeding away with loot. "If we had a mandate to defend these people,

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and if I was looking through a scope instead of looking through the lens of my camera, these vehicles would be done," he says. "These people could return to their village, and they'd be safe. Well, I was taking pictures."

Like Brian Steidle, we are all observers now. For more than four years, we have known exactly what is going on in western Sudan, yet we have failed to halt (or even to impede) it. To be sure, Darfur is not the only man-made disaster that has unfolded in the world in recent years; far from it. In North Korea, Burma, and Zimbabwe, populations are also suffering the effects of political cruelty. What has taken place in Darfur may or may not be judged "worse" than such extreme repression—who could really judge whether Kim Jong Il is a crueler man than Omar Bashir?—but it is certainly different. Liberation is possible for victims of political repression, but the dead cannot be liberated. Tyranny is an outrage, but genocide is an outrage *and* an emergency.

And so Darfur merited a different response than other contemporary tragedies, a swift and effective response that we did not deliver. The genocide may not be over, but the verdict on the world's reaction is in: we have failed. We have been hypocrites and we have failed. How could this have happened? How could we have known so much and done so little? The story of how we acquiesced in the destruction of Darfur is not a simple one. But from the burgeoning literature on the subject, it is possible to begin piecing together some explanations.

II.

For centuries the Fur were the most powerful group in Darfur, ruling the area through a dynasty of sultans that arose in the 1600s. The word "Dar" means homeland, so "Darfur" literally means "homeland of the Fur," although the area we today call Darfur has long been home to numerous tribes. Besides the Fur, the largest non-Arab (or African) groups are the Masalit and the Zaghawa; others include the Tunjur and the Daju. Darfur is home to numerous Arab tribes as well, including the Rizayqat, Habbaniyya, Ta'aisha, Bani Halba, Misiriyya, and Ma'alia. The divisions between African and Arab are not as clear-cut as one might imagine. For one thing, all Darfuris are Muslim. (Their brand of Islam draws substantially on local traditions and has historically been more liberal than versions practiced throughout much of the Middle East. In an essay included in the volume *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace,* edited by Alex de Waal, Ahmed Kamal El-Din calls it "a Sufi, tranquil, tolerant, and consequently popular Islam.") For another thing, intermarriage between the groups has blurred the ethnic distinctions over generations, and, at least to Western eyes, the Africans and Arabs of Darfur look similar.

In general, the African tribes are sedentary farmers, while the Arab tribes are nomadic herders, but this is not true across the board. The Zaghawa, for instance, are both Africans and herders. Moreover, while the violence of the past five years has generally consisted of Arab groups targeting African groups, the contours of the fighting have not always been so straightforward. Some Arab groups have stayed out of the conflict altogether. Meanwhile, the African groups have sometimes managed to unite in resisting the onslaught but have sometimes fought among themselves.

The genocide is partly a conflict among ethnic groups within Darfur for land. But, as Alex de Waal argues in the opening essay of *War in Darfur,* it is best understood as a conflict between Sudan's center and its periphery—a conflict in which the government in Khartoum has co-opted Arab Darfuris to help defeat rebels from the African population. "The hyper-dominance of the national capital is the single most important reality in Sudan today," de Waal observes.

The awkward co-existence between Darfur in the west and Khartoum in the east has deep historical roots. As with so many countries in Africa, Sudan's unwieldy borders were created at the whim of outside powers, and the historical justifications for Darfur's inclusion in Sudan are weak to say the least. Darfur was an independent entity until 1874, when an Arab slave trader named Al Zubayr Rahma Mansur amassed an army and set out to conquer the Fur sultanate. He succeeded, but not for long: sensing an opportunity to expand their reach, Egypt and the Turks, who had already conquered other parts of Sudan in 1821, moved westward into the region. In 1885, a charismatic Sudanese holy man known as the Mahdi evicted the Egyptians and Turks from Sudan. In 1898, his successor was in turn evicted by the British, who now assumed control of Khartoum. In the chaos that attended the British takeover, Ali Dinar, heir to the Fur sultanate, seized power in Darfur and reached a deal with the British under which Darfur would be independent once again.

That was how things remained until the outbreak of World War I, when England began to worry that Darfur, a Muslim state, might be inclined to support the Ottomans in the war. And so, according to the historian M. W. Daly, the British authorities in Khartoum resorted to a strategy for pursuing their interests in western Sudan that will sound quite familiar to us nearly a century later: they "began secretly to arm the Arab tribes of Darfur" against the Fur rule of Ali Dinar. In 1916, the British deposed Ali Dinar and made Darfur part of Sudan for good.

For the next forty years, the British and the Egyptians would share sovereignty over Sudan, though it was the British who held the true levers of power. For Darfur, this period was characterized by intentional neglect: the region remained poor and underdeveloped, even as the center of the country lurched fitfully toward the modern world. The colonial period in Darfur is chronicled in impressive detail in Daly's book, which is far and away the best of the historical works. His chapter on the colonial neglect of Darfur is full of telling quotations from British officials—like the one who, in arguing against expanding educational opportunities for Darfuri children, cautioned against developing a local elementary school "into something … more than the district needed or deserved." By the time Sudan declared independence in 1956, Darfur lagged so far behind the country's center—in education, infrastructure, and wealth—that it might as well have been a separate nation.

And Sudan's new leaders had no intention of helping it catch up. Through decades' worth of twists and turns in Sudanese politics—a democratic government, followed by a military regime, followed by another democratic government, followed by another military regime, followed by a third democratic interlude that ended in 1989 with the rise of the National Islamic Front, the odious party that rules Sudan to this day—Khartoum's basic approach to governing Darfur was not so dissimilar from that of the British. Daly calls it "internal colonialism." Whatever it was, it ensured that Darfur remained underdeveloped and neglected, even when, as during periods of crushing famine in the 1970s and 1980s, the region desperately needed help from the government that was, in theory, responsible for it.

The ethnic makeup of Darfur and the historical tension between the center of Sudan and the outlying west are the two most obvious roots of the genocide—but they are just the beginning of the story. The third factor arrived on the scene in 1969, in the figure

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of a young Libyan colonel named Muammar Qaddafi. Today Qaddafi is largely viewed in the West as something of an irrelevant eccentric, popping up occasionally from his desert kingdom to issue odd pronouncements on geopolitics but more or less leaving the rest of the world alone. It is easy to forget the zeal with which the wild young radical set about destabilizing and terrorizing Africa during his first decades in power. Indeed, the portrait of Qaddafi that emerges from J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins's book (a detailed and dry account of the Chad-Libya relationship and its impact on Darfur) is that of a man who was in some way addicted to violence and intrigue.

Although Qaddafi claimed to be an opponent of imperialism, he was in fact Africa's foremost imperialist. As Burr and Collins write, his political philosophy resembled nothing so much as Mussolini's: a desire for the grandeur of empire combined with a belief that his own race was destined to rule over others. In his quest for empire, Qaddafi was constantly proposing "unions" with other countries, and constantly being disappointed when his offers were resisted. Immediately after taking power, Qaddafi surprised Nasser in Egypt with a request for union between the two nations, and he would later demand union with Sudan as well. But for twenty-five years his designs would focus mainly on Chad.

RON HAVIV / VII

Chad, like Sudan, straddles the border between sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, with a population made up of both African and Arab tribes. When Qaddafi came to power, Chad was ruled by François Tombalbaye, a Christian African from the south. This was unacceptable to Qaddafi, so he began funding the National Liberation Front of Chad (better known by its French acronym, FROLINAT), the northern Chadian rebels who were seeking to overthrow Tombalbaye. He also seized a piece of land in Chad called the Aozou Strip, claiming that it was historically part of Libya. As Chadian leaders came and went, as rebel leaders fell and rose, as ethnic alliances among Chad's rebel groups shifted, Qaddafi continued to seek control of the country to his south. In late 1980, he and his Chadian proxy forces succeeded in toppling Chad's government, leading the Libyan leader to declare the "complete unity" of the two countries. But this union was short-lived, as Chad's deposed president, Hissene Habre, soon regrouped and took back the capital. For a time, Libya controlled the northern half of the country and Habre ruled the southern half—the two parties separated by French troops. It was not until 1994 that Qaddafi, exhausted by decades of war, would finally leave Chad for good.

What did all this have to do with Darfur? First, there were the weapons. Throughout his long war with Chad, Qaddafi used Darfur as a base, sometimes with the acquiescence of Sudanese leaders. "The influx of arms into Darfur," write Burr and Collins, "was the most criminal act by Qaddafi in the thirty years' war for Chad." Second, there was the ideology. Qaddafi's brand of Arab supremacism trickled into Darfur along with his guns. Libya backed the formation of a Darfur-based group known as the Arab Gathering, an alliance of leaders that sought to promote the interests of Arab tribes. As Arab groups organized and armed, so did the Fur and Zaghawa. Small-scale wars began to break out among various groups. Suddenly the inhabitants of Darfur were more inclined than ever to conceive of their identities in starkly racial terms. And thanks in part to Qaddafi's long war in Chad, they had the weapons to act on their grievances.

Into this volatile situation, in 1989, stepped the National Islamic Front. Led by General Omar Bashir, the NIF overthrew the democratically elected government of Sadiq Al Mahdi and assumed power in Sudan. Though the NIF was not the first military government in Sudan's history, it represented a clear break with what had come before. As Burr and Collins explain, "Bashir imposed the most implacable authoritarian government in the history of the Sudan, ancient or modern, to the astonishment if not disbelief of the Sudanese." Daly describes the NIF as "totalitarian," and this is not a stretch. Ideologically, the NIF was a toxic brew of some of the worst traditions to come out of the Middle East and Africa over the previous half-century: it combined the austere devotion to radical Islam of the Saudi monarchs, the Arab supremacism of Qaddafi, and the cold pragmatism of the post-colonial African dictator whose main objective is to cling to power at all costs.

As tribal conflict mounted in Darfur—in addition to Qaddafi's weapons, environmental factors were exacerbating tensions, as drought and famine drove large numbers of Arabs and Zaghawa from Chad into Sudan, changing Darfur's ethnic balance at a time when the total amount of arable land was diminishing due to desertification—the NIF supported the Arab militias. It also reorganized the governance of Darfur, dividing the region into new districts in order to reduce the numerical dominance of the Fur. But even as the NIF introduced new problems into western Sudan, it maintained faith with at least one venerable Sudanese tradition: it kept Darfur, as a whole, underdeveloped and poor.

The deteriorating situation in Darfur in the 1990s did not elicit much notice from the world, in part because the news out of Sudan tended to focus on the civil war in the country's south. Unlike the conflict in Darfur, this war had religious dimensions—southern Sudanese, in contrast to Darfuris, are Christians and animists—but many of the dynamics that would characterize the Darfur genocide were in play here as well: Arabs fighting Africans; the central government using violence to maintain control of a poor,

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peripheral region with only tenuous historical links to the rest of the country; the arming by Khartoum of proxy forces with links to other countries in order to terrorize Sudanese civilians (in this case, the Lord's Resistance Army, a sadistic cult of Ugandans known for brainwashing children and amputating their victims' limbs). As would be the case in Darfur, the utter ruthlessness of the NIF—extreme even by the standards of third-world dictatorships—was on full display. For instance, the NIF denied food aid to civilians believed to be sympathetic to the rebels, resulting in upward of 500,000 deaths. (The depredations of this era are summarized in *Not on Our Watch*, the peculiar book by Don Cheadle and John Prendergast. If you can get past the sections written in Cheadle's exceedingly bizarre and offensively digressive voice, the book contains some useful historical information.)

John Garang, the leader of the southern rebels, was no angel, and he was certainly responsible for his share of abuses. But Garang did represent a population with legitimate grievances. And the NIF chose to fight Garang essentially by committing genocide against the civilian population from which his soldiers came. The moral difference between Garang and the NIF was significant. This was a government that had no compunction about killing massive numbers of its own citizens. In the end, some two million people died in the south before the Bush administration—under pressure from American evangelicals, who had taken an interest in the plight of their fellow Christians in southern Sudan—finally helped to broker a peace deal, which, after more than two years of negotiations, was signed in early 2005.

It was around the time these negotiations started that Darfuri rebels took up arms. The timing was not a coincidence. Darfuris were worried that they would be further marginalized in the new Sudan that would emerge from an agreement between the south and the north. The south had fought for a stake in Sudan, for the right to be treated as more than an impoverished peripheral outpost, subservient to the central government. Darfuris had similar anxieties, and similar hopes. In April 2003, two groups made up of Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit—the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement—launched a successful attack on a military airfield in the region. The Darfur rebellion was under way.

Khartoum was caught by surprise, but by July of that year it had formulated a response. It would do what it had done in the south: crush the rebels by exterminating, or at least displacing, the African tribal groups from which the resistance had sprouted. To help accomplish this task, Khartoum turned to its longtime allies, the Arab tribes of Darfur. The historical competition for land between ethnic groups, now exacerbated by environmental factors; the longstanding tensions between the center of Sudan and its western edge; the infusion of weapons and Arab supremacism from Qaddafi in the north; the brutality of the men who ran the NIF to the east; the impending arrival of a peace deal in the south—all these factors had brought the African tribes of Darfur to a terrible moment in their history. And so the descent into genocide began.

III.

The Darfur literature chronicles what happened next in two separate genres. The memoirs (as well as many of the documentaries) tell the awful story of what transpired on the ground—the individual tales of torture, rape, and brutality—while other books focus on the developments (or lack thereof) in Washington, at the United Nations, and in Khartoum. To read these accounts in tandem is a maddening experience, since they cover the same time periods but seem to take place in parallel worlds. In one world, those on the ground in Darfur witness unimaginable and systematic cruelties on a daily basis—crimes that call out for a strong and speedy response. In the other world, international leaders conduct peace talks, urge patience, contemplate sanctions, and wrangle with one another at the United Nations—actions that would never even come close to stopping the killing.

Other than Steidle's, the most powerful of the Darfur memoirs belongs to Daoud Hari, a survivor of the genocide. His story could scarcely be more harrowing. A Zaghawa raised in a North Darfur village, he is sent by his family to school in El Fasher, the region's largest city. There he learns English, reads Western literature, and develops an interest in the wider world. Next he immigrates to Libya; then, in pursuit of higher wages, he moves to Egypt; then he is caught trying to sneak into Israel, where he had hoped to find still better pay. He is extradited to prison in Egypt and eventually released to Chad. From there he heads back into Darfur to reunite with his family.

By this time, however, the genocide is under way, and as Hari travels home, he watches the disaster unfold. In one village, he learns that "junked appliances and other scrap metal had been packed around the huge bombs dropped by the Sudanese government, creating a million flying daggers with each explosion.... Most of those killed by the bombs were buried in several pieces." In another town, he notes that the residents' water sources have been bombed. Watching the young men of this village join up with the rebels, Hari observes that "no one in the boys' families would try to stop them. It was as if everybody had accepted that we were all going to die, and it was for each to decide how they wanted to go." He finally arrives in his own village just as it is about to be destroyed by the Sudanese Army and the Janjaweed in an assault that kills his older brother. Hari flees toward Chad with the survivors. Along the way he meets residents of other villages who are doing the same, all with their own horrible stories. He learns of a woman who has hanged herself from a tree after being raped by the Janjaweed. When Hari finds her, "two of her three children were dead. The third child died in our arms."

In Chad, Hari uses his command of English to work with NGOs and international officials. He sees more suffering and hears more stories: "So many villages were caught completely by surprise: surrounded, burned alive, massacred from helicopters above and Janjaweed below, with only a few escaping, or a few coming from other villages to find everyone dead and the bodies burned in heartbreaking positions; mothers died trying to protect their children and husbands died trying to protect their wives." The suffering is monumental in scale and excruciating in the particulars. Hari talks to a man whose four-year-old daughter was speared in the stomach by a Janjaweed fighter's bayonet. The soldier then lifted her dying body—still alive and bleeding—into the air and danced underneath it in celebration. The father, tied to a nearby tree, watched the entire episode. "It took a long time for her to die," the man tells Hari, "her blood coming down so fresh and red on this—what was he? a man? a devil? He was painted red with my little girl's blood and he was dancing. What was he?"

Next Hari begins serving as a translator for journalists, leading them in and out of Darfur. In one town he learns that "villagers escaping up a hillside were machine-gunned from helicopters" and sees "the hill still littered with at least thirty-five bodies—many of them children." Later, while translating for BBC reporters, he comes across a forested area on the outskirts of a village. "We walked through a strange world of occasionally falling human limbs and heads," he recalls. "A leg fell near me. A head thumped

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to the ground farther away." And then: "eighty-one men and boys fallen across one another, hacked and stabbed to death in that same attack." Hari's career as a translator ends when, during one of his forays into Darfur, he is captured by a rebel group aligned with the government. Turned over to the Sudanese military, he is tortured and then put on trial, before Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico—the home state of the *National Geographic* reporter with whom Hari had been traveling—arrives in Darfur to negotiate their freedom.

The other on-the-ground chronicles—*Heart of Darfur* and *Darfur Diaries*—are neither as well-written as Steidle's nor as gripping as Hari's. Still, the stories they relate add to the historical record. *Heart of Darfur* is written by a Doctors Without Borders nurse from New Zealand who traveled to Darfur in 2005 and 2006. Unlike the other writers, who are more interested in the politics of the situation, Lisa French Blaker writes from an almost exclusively humanitarian perspective: her role in Darfur was to save lives, not to reach political conclusions, and her book focuses on recounting tales of human suffering, not analyzing the causes of that suffering. "The politics of war are complicated, too complicated for a nurse like me," she demurs.

And yet Blaker's perspective as a nurse makes her story a useful historical document. Unlike many journalists and activists who were able to travel only in rebel-held territory, Blaker, because she worked for a humanitarian organization, went everywhere. And the differences between her descriptions of rebel territory and government territory are stark. In rebel territory, humanitarian workers generally seem welcome, whereas the government goes out of its way to obstruct medical workers operating in its territory, setting arbitrary limits on the amount of work they are able to do in vulnerable areas.

Blaker and her team make several visits to a town called El Wadi, which had been attacked by the Sudanese Liberation Army but was still held by the government. "The Zaghawa tribe, among others, were being treated badly and threatened because of their presumed support of the SLA attack," she writes. "But there were no outsiders to see what unfolded." Their trips to El Wadi require approval from a Sudanese military official named "Commander Ali," who allows them into town for short periods but seems bent on hampering their work by intimidating patients and limiting the lengths of their visits. ("I know who you are and we do not need your services," the commander initially tells the group. But "Steve negotiated and the commander gave a little.... We could have two hours to look at the sickest patients. Two hours in a village of 20,000 people, and again I was the only medical person.") On Blaker's final visit to El Wadi, Commander Ali abruptly evicts the team after learning that Blaker has treated two young children for gunshot wounds. He had forbidden the team to treat anyone with gunshot wounds, presumably because he regarded them as rebels—never mind that Blaker's patients were a seven-year-old boy and his little sister. Both had been shot in the legs by soldiers who were firing guns into homes in the hope of nabbing rebels.

Although Blaker does not say so, anecdotes like these make her book probably the most damning account to date of what many observers have termed "genocide by attrition"—the Sudanese government's policy of killing off African tribes not by marching them into gas chambers, but by disrupting their livelihoods and then systematically denying them access to the medical and humanitarian help they need to survive. What other explanation could there be for a commander enraged by the prospect of a seven-year-old boy and his little sister being treated for gunshot wounds?

The authors of *Darfur Diaries*—three young human rights activists—snuck into Darfur in November 2004 and toured a number of villages. They, too, add to the historical record with their stories of savagery—again, almost all at the hands of the government or the Janjaweed. After a while, reading all these books together, the tales become strikingly repetitive. Over and over, villages are bombed by government planes and swarmed by Janjaweed fighters; women are raped; survivors flee toward camps, with many dying along the way. These similarities point to something significant: they suggest the systematic nature of what has occurred in Darfur over the past several years. Taken together, the books show why the Darfur tragedy cannot be dismissed as just a series of bad things. At a certain point, the mountain of nearly identical anecdotes contained in the Darfur literature (not to mention the reports of human rights organizations and the dispatches of wire services) pile so high that they leave the realm of the anecdotal and become something more—a record of murderous collective malice that has to be regarded as greater, and more pre-meditated, than the sum of its individual parts.

Radical evil has become commonplace in Darfur. It is impossible to reach any other conclusion. There are simply too many government-sponsored men who show up in these narratives solely for the purpose of committing almost incomprehensible acts of cruelty. The sadism knows no bounds. *Heart of Darfur* describes the fate of a nineteen-year-old pregnant woman named Miriam whose husband had been killed six months before. One afternoon Janjaweed entered her home, and one of them tapped her pregnant belly. "What have you got in there?" he asked. "I think she's got money inside," said another. And so they "beat her with their guns, pushed her to the ground and kicked, punched and whipped her. They laughed as she rolled, made bets as they joked who would get the money, wondering how much she had inside. When they tired of their game some time later her baby was dead and Miriam went into labour."

Stories such as this one should disgust us, and they do. But one effect of the extraordinary amount of knowledge we have about Darfur is that these stories eventually run together and gradually lose their power to shock. Horrors become tropes; repetition eventually numbs the moral imagination. Consider how the sheik of the town of Shegeg Karo, interviewed in a typical passage in *Darfur Diaries*, explains what happened to his village: "The government came first, shooting and bombing. The people ran away to the mountains to hide. The janjaweed came after to finish. There has been nobody to protect us but Allah." If that is the first description you have heard of the destruction in Darfur, it sounds alarming. After four books of similar anecdotes—many of them far more gruesome—the tale of the sheik of Shegeg Karo starts to sound downright prosaic. It is a terrible thing to admit, but the more information we consume about Darfur, the less shocking each piece of new information seems. And surely that is a part of the problem. Ignorance is not the only ally of indifference; sometimes knowledge, too, blunts the heart and the will.

IV.

While all this was happening in Darfur, a parallel story was unfolding on the world stage. The most complete moment-by-moment account of the geopolitics surrounding the genocide is provided by Eric Reeves, an English professor turned Darfur activist who has published regular columns

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about Sudan on his website for years. Recently he collected many of these writings in *A Long Day's Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide*. (Reeves has written often for this magazine in recent years, and I have usually been his editor.) His book begins in late 2003 and proceeds more or less chronologically. Reeves never travels to Darfur to witness the genocide first-hand, but his book is a testament to the value of obsessively reading wire services and human rights reports that everyone else ignores. In December 2003, more than a month before *The New York Times* first mentioned the mounting catastrophe and many months before it would dawn on Americans that a genocide was under way, he cited a dispatch from the U.N. wire service IRIN, which relayed the following quote from a tribal leader: "I believe this is an elimination of the black race."

Reeves writes in a sustained rage, hurling invective at anyone and everyone who might act to rescue Darfur but does not do so. The titles of his columns say it all: "June 1, 2004—Acquiescing Before Unambiguous Genocide in Darfur: The United Nations, Europe, Canada, the Arab League, the African Union"; "July 1, 2004—Annan and Powell Visit Sudan—Mortality Figures Rise—No Sense of Urgency"; "December 6, 2004—Genocide in Darfur—No Humanitarian Intervention—Equivocation—Avoidance of Moral Responsibility." You get the idea. The columns are extremely repetitive, but that is precisely the point: again and again Reeves argues for the powers to send a substantial number of troops to Darfur; again and again, the powers opt for lesser measures. He repeats his arguments, they repeat what they do (or don't do), and the hell continues.

Reeves was not the only writer to narrate the international community's failed efforts to stop the genocide. A number of essays in *War in Darfur* do the same; and Jan Egeland, the former U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, devotes a chapter of his new memoir (a fairly flat chronicle of his years in international politics) to his coordination of relief efforts in Darfur—efforts that the Sudanese government, acting on its policy of genocide by attrition, often obstructed. Reading this material with the benefit of hindsight, a number of themes emerge. The first is the grossly inadequate nature of the responses contemplated by the international community at nearly every step along the way. In June 2004, for instance, after the genocide had been going on for almost a year, and at which point the death toll may already have reached 100,000, Reeves noted that Hilary Benn, Britain's international development secretary, had come out against humanitarian intervention. "I do not think it is a helpful suggestion," he said. "I think we should let the monitors do their work. I think they will make a difference." As Reeves points out, Benn was talking about ten African Union monitors who were being sent to Darfur. Ten monitors in response to the deaths of 100,000 people!

Three weeks later, Reeves cites an Associated Press report paraphrasing Colin Powell: "As a stick, Powell warned that the United States might take the issue to the UN Security Council if Sudan ignored the problem. He believes that got Bashir's attention because no government wants the stigma of Security Council sanctions." That was our idea of a stick capable of stopping the carnage: to *threaten* to report the murderer to the United Nations, where he *might* be hit with sanctions. In retrospect, this seems delusional. Around the same time, as Reeves notes, the United States ludicrously proposed placing an international travel ban on Janjaweed leaders—as if such a threat might really cause those bent on raping and looting to reconsider. All the while, as they settled for half-measures, international leaders counseled patience. Reeves notes that Robert Zoellick, Bush's deputy secretary of state, urged patience with the African Union while testifying before Congress in June 2005. Later that year, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer would tell a reporter that ending the genocide "is a long process."

The second theme is the international community's persistent faith that negotiations between the rebels and the government would somehow stop the killing. In fact, they probably ended up enabling it. *War in Darfur* contains several essays on the political negotiations that resulted in the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006. The first cease-fire agreement between the government and rebels came in September 2003. That cease-fire was extended in November 2003. Another cease-fire was signed in April 2004. Peace talks were held in July 2004. The peace talks continued in August 2004. Another round began in October 2004. The parties convened again in December 2004. In June 2005, the parties negotiated more. And again in September 2005. And again in late November, with this final round lasting five long months until early May 2006, when a deal was finally inked—a deal that did not end the genocide at all.

All told, the parties held seven rounds of peace talks over nearly two years, straight through some of the worst days of the genocide. Think of it this way: while the NIF was burning towns, raping huge numbers of women, and forcing Darfur's African tribes into camps, it was also sitting at a negotiating table and stalling for time—and being indulged in this farce by international mediators. Many of the authors in *War in Darfur* seem oblivious to how absurd this looks in retrospect. Dawit Toga, a member of the African Union team that mediated the talks, writes with a straight face that "although the parties were unable to agree on an agenda and on a concrete framework on how to proceed, the Addis Ababa meeting sensitized the mediators and allowed them to better understand the issues at stake." The negotiations to which Toga is referring took place in July 2004—the same month that Brian Steidle saw the pictures of the schoolgirls who had been burned alive.

The work of diplomats certainly has its place in international politics; but how could mere mediators, no matter how "sensitized," ever deliver peace when one of the negotiating parties was in the process of carrying out mass murder? A part of the problem with negotiating an end to genocide is that negotiations depend on the good faith of the participants. The parties cannot be liars, or people for whom a signature on a paper is just a tactical move. But throughout the Darfur conflict, the NIF has demonstrated a contempt for truth that, even by the standards of authoritarian propaganda, must count as brazen. (To this day, the government claims that only 10,000 people have died in Darfur. Estimates by reliable sources differ, but most news organizations put the number between 200,000 and 400,000.)

In the end, the Darfur Peace Agreement signed in May 2006 was stillborn, because it was signed by only one of the rebel factions. (The JEM did not sign, and by this point the SLA had split into two factions, only one of which signed.) But even if all the parties had accepted the agreement, is it really conceivable that the NIF would have stopped the killing, disarmed the Janjaweed, and allowed the millions of displaced people to go home? The NIF had spent the past several years killing hundreds of thousands of its own people while technically observing cease-fires. Who in their right mind would trust such a government to implement a peace agreement?

Eventually it did seem to dawn on the international community that only troops—and not peace negotiations—

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were going to stop the killing. And that led to the final misstep: the decision to work with the United Nations to get troops into Darfur. The United Nations plays many useful roles in the world; indeed, as Egeland argues in his memoir, it has often played a useful humanitarian role in Darfur itself, helping to coordinate the delivery of food, medicine, and water and thereby keeping millions alive in the camps. But while the United Nations was a perfectly good vehicle for delivering aid, it proved to be a terrible vehicle for delivering troops.

The first troops to go into Darfur were soldiers of the African Union. They were overmatched from the start. While their ranks eventually grew to 7,000, they never came close to controlling catastrophe.

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Indeed, their mandate explicitly prevented them from doing so. They were allowed only to observe the violence, not to stop it. "You are witnessing what happens, but you aren't helping," one Darfuri told a contingent of A.U. troops in October 2006, according to the Associated Press. This was a pretty fair summary of the A.U.'s role.

One sequence in *Heart of Darfur* revolves around a compound that the African Union set up on the edge of a village called Saleem. With Janjaweed intimidating the local population in town, many non-Arabs decided they had to leave. Some fled toward rebel-held territory, but others decided to set up an impromptu camp in what Blaker describes as "the barbed wire wasteland that circled the African Union's compound." Outside the compound, they hoped they would be safe. The problem was, they needed water. And the African Union at first refused to share its water, wanting the people to go away. Eventually Doctors Without Borders convinced the A.U. to start regularly filling two barrels of water for the civilians. Sometimes the A.U. followed through on its promise to supply the water; sometimes, in a bid to get the displaced to return to their homes—homes where they would likely be killed or raped—the A.U. withheld it. Predictably enough, disease and dehydration spread in the makeshift camp outside the compound, allowing the genocide to run its course.

None of this should have happened. A proper protection force would have gone into the town and evicted the Janjaweed. But the A.U. was not much of a protection force. By the middle of 2005, it was clear that the A.U. had to be replaced. When the Bush administration decided to work through the United Nations to make that happen, however, problems began to crop up. The name of the biggest problem was China. Since China, which purchases Sudanese oil and sells the country weapons, holds a veto on the Security Council, there was never a chance that the United Nations would authorize a non-consensual deployment of troops. This meant that no troops would enter Darfur without Khartoum's approval. And just like that, the international community found that it had essentially given those committing the genocide veto power over whether and when forces would be deployed to stop them.

Not surprisingly, Khartoum delayed and wrangled for two long years. It was January 2008 before U.N. troops—technically it was a U.N.–A.U. hybrid force—took over peacekeeping duties in Darfur. It is difficult to know exactly how many people died in the time between when the United States resolved to dispatch a U.N. force and when the deployment finally happened, but the number is undoubtedly substantial. Moreover, the U.N. force has not exactly stopped the killing. For one thing, it can do nothing to prevent the Sudanese Air Force from bombing villages, which Khartoum has done several times since the United Nations hit the ground. For another, seven months into the mission, only 9,000 of the promised 26,000 troops have deployed. This is nowhere near the manpower that is necessary to provide the security that would allow Darfuris to begin their return home. And so they remain huddled in camps, waiting for help that is probably never going to come.

What should we have done instead? There were drawbacks to every available option; but given that only international troops could provide the security Darfuris needed (and still need), and given that the United Nations has for many reasons proved a disastrous vehicle for supplying those troops, it seems clear in retrospect that a NATO coalition—acting, as it did in Kosovo, without authorization from either the United Nations or the killers themselves—would have had the best chance of ending the genocide in a reasonable timeframe. The Bush administration's hesitation to assemble a NATO coalition and enter Darfur without permission from Khartoum was somewhat understandable, given what was taking place in Iraq. When the final history of Darfur is written, Iraq will surely be judged to have been a central factor mitigating against action in Sudan. But let us not make too much of this dark irony. Would we have acted in Darfur if there had been no war in Iraq? Somehow I doubt it.

It is true that the American military was stretched thin in Afghanistan and Iraq, but France and Germany have militaries numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Other allies could have contributed ground troops as well. At the same time, American fighter jets might have quickly convinced Khartoum to rein in its militias and stop bombing civilians—which was exactly what happened in Kosovo. But we never so much as threatened to use our airpower on behalf of Darfuris. Might this not have made a difference? Would it not at least have been worth exploring?

And if we had sent NATO troops to Darfur, how would they have been received? It is impossible to know for sure, but we do know that the victims of the genocide have repeatedly begged for inter-

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national troops capable of protecting them—something U.N. troops will almost certainly never be able to accomplish . In a widely reported incident in 2006, displaced Darfuris gathered in a camp and chanted, "Welcome welcome USA, welcome welcome international force!" Some Sudanese evince a general, and surprising, faith in America and the West—a faith that, in the wake of our considerable failures in Iraq, we ourselves lack. It crops up repeatedly in the books and the documentaries.

After enduring weeks of torture at the hands of the Sudanese Army, Daoud Hari describes his elation to see American military personnel show up at the back of the Sudanese courtroom where he and an American journalist are being tried for spying: "My God, you have no idea what they looked like to us. . . .The good America was in the room." In *All About Darfur*—which is the least slick of the Darfur movies and, in many ways, the most revealing—William Ezekiel, editor of the dissident *Khartoum Monitor*, expresses hope that Americans will somehow rescue Sudan, to which the filmmaker replies incredulously, "Are they saints—angels that come to the rescue of the world, of the universe?" His response: "Americans? They are not angels. But they are keen enough to save the weak from the oppressors." In another film, *Darfur Now*, two rebel soldiers, surely aware of the camera's presence, conduct the following exchange: "Right now the black people are dying," says one. "The white people will help us," flatly asserts the other. "We are so happy that America is here to save us like you have done for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq," villagers whose town has recently been bombed by the government tell Brian Steidle in *The Devil Came on Horseback*—apparently mistaking the presence of a former U.S. soldier in Darfur for evidence that Western intervention is on the way.

It is true that Americans are not angels; and the Darfuri villagers who welcome Steidle seem to overstate the scale of our achievements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then again, if my village had just been bombed and my children and I were facing the prospect of likely death at the hands of marauding militias, I would not be picky about who came to rescue me. If a superpower happened to arrive instead of an angel, that would be just fine.

V.

The final strand of the Darfur story has very little to do with Darfur itself, and everything to do with us. Darfur has spawned a remarkable movement of American activists, particularly among students and people in their twenties. This has been a wonderful thing. The activists have kept the issue at, or near, the forefront of political debate. They have forced numerous universities and states to divest their holdings from companies that do business with Sudan. They have created institutions such as the Genocide Intervention Network—founded by Swarthmore students and now based in Washington—that have exhibited an admirable impatience with the inaction of their own government. (This impatience has sometimes led in audacious directions. At one point, the Swarthmore students actually looked into obtaining an unmanned aerial vehicle and deploying it to Darfur themselves. The idea of a bunch of college students launching a rogue quasi-military operation in Darfur was not very sound, but the spirit was right.)

Perhaps most significantly, these activists have helped to rescue the concept of activism itself. As anyone who attended an anti–World Bank rally in the early part of this decade can tell you, by 2000 liberal activism had fallen into something of a self-parodying state. The activist worldview, if such a thing could be said to exist, was an odd mélange of hostility to capitalism, Israel, the American use of Vieques as a bombing range, and anyone who had played a role in the jailing of Mumia Abu-Jamal. No wonder most members of my generation kept their distance, preferring to view activism as a relic from their parents' youth. The Darfur activists, to their immense credit, have begun to change this. They have made a forceful and convincing case to young people that there are still causes worth marching for. And they have signaled that one of those causes—an efficacious humanitarianism—will be taken seriously by the next generation of liberal leaders.

But no movement is perfect. Understandably consumed by the work of trying to stop a genocide, the Save Darfur movement has not always had time for self-criticism. It has now been five years since the genocide began and four years since the movement started work in earnest, and while the activists can legitimately claim many successes, they cannot claim the one success that really matters: stopping the killing. Of course, even an activist movement that did everything right might not have been able to convince the Bush administration to end the genocide. It is the American president, not the American activists, whom history will judge most harshly. Still, the question seems worth asking: What might this admirable movement have done differently?

Several of the movies and books about Darfur spend considerable time on the activists. Watching and reading, it becomes apparent that the Darfur activists were much more comfortable with the descriptive than with the prescriptive. That is, they were very good at raising awareness about the genocide, but when it came to articulating what is needed to stop a genocide, they either faltered or coalesced around half-measures. The thesis of Don Cheadle and John Prendergast's book is that, in a democracy, the only way to ensure that the government will act in faraway places such as Darfur is to build a mass constituency of voters and activists who will demand that the government do so. This is correct, up to a point. It is not enough for that constituency to demand that the government act. It must be willing to demand that the government act in ways that will actually stop the killing. *It must be willing to support the use of power.* If it is not, then its righteous efforts will have been wasted.

And much of the activism surrounding Darfur never even reached the point of demanding half-measures; it settled instead for consciousness-raising, for rhetoric, for the gestural culture of protest. The cover of Cheadle and Prendergast's book advertises that it "Includes six ways you can help today." The first way? "Raise awareness." But awareness has already been raised, and Bashir is unmoved. Some of these pedagogical exercises have been more successful than others: the green "Save Darfur" banners and bracelets have become ubiquitous, but not Cheadle's anti-mass-murder shoes, whose soles leave an imprint on the ground that reads "Stomp Out Genocide." ("Activism and fashion needn't be mutually exclusive, and in fact, if sporting a phat boot with a strong message can attract more young people and bring them into the fray . . . why not take this opportunity to create a righteous blend? Besides, I've always rocked Timberlands and relished any excuse to stuff another pair into my shoe-heavy closet." So style will stop the genocide!)

Beyond the awareness-raising, things got problematic. One of the most popular causes among Darfur activists was lobbying state governments and universities to divest from companies doing business with Sudan. With its echoes of the fight against apartheid in the 1980s, this idea had understandable appeal. It was not, in and of itself, a bad idea. But the notion that divestment alone would play a key role in ending the killing was too optimistic.

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The campaign against South African apartheid was a long-term struggle against a political system; the campaign to save Darfur, by contrast, is a short-term struggle against an ongoing emergency. Sending a message to Sudan that its behavior would have long-term economic consequences was certainly a worthwhile endeavor, but it was no substitute for putting troops on the ground in Darfur. Ideology and bigotry and the lust for power often inspire people to act against their economic interests. *Sand and Sorrow*—the glossiest of the Darfur movies, narrated virtuously by George Clooney—at one point shows an activist carrying a sign that reads, "The dollars stop the dying." History tells us that isn't true.

Another position taken by activists was to call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Like divestment, this was an admirable idea for the long run. Those who commit genocide should be punished, and it will be a wonderful day when Omar Bashir sits in the Hague like Slobodan Milosevic before him. But the long-term goal of bringing the *genocidaires* to justice is no substitute for the short-term work of stopping a genocide. Many seemed not to appreciate this distinction. *Darfur Now* chronicles the work of Luis Moreno Ocampo, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court charged with investigating crimes in Darfur. A few weeks ago, Ocampo issued an arrest warrant for Omar Bashir. Ocampo grew up in Argentina, and he explains that his country's "dirty war" helped to shape his faith in the power of the law. "The top generals were prosecuted for mass murders. And I was a deputy prosecutor, so it was a huge challenge. And I saw how the information we provide, the evidence we present, changed everything." The trouble with the analogy is that when Argentina's generals went on trial, the killing was already over. And that is when the Darfur trials should start: when the killing is over. For now, it seems unlikely that handing down indictments against Sudanese leaders will stop the next village from being destroyed or the next woman from being raped.

Genocide really is different from other foreign policy crises, in that it will not wait. Either you stop genocide immediately or you fail to stop it. And when it came to the question of troops, the Darfur activists were split. Many were uncomfortable with the use of force. Cheadle and Prendergast are candid about this: "Many of us peace and human rights advocates are rightly reluctant about the use of force. We need to get over it. There is such a thing as evil in this world, and sometimes the only way to confront evil is through the judicious use of military force." Amen, as long as "judicious" also means effective.

Eventually the movement coalesced around the idea that U.N. troops were the answer. In the wake of the Iraq debacle, the idea of sending U.N. peacekeepers to Darfur represented for many activists a sort of safe compromise—troops would be put on the ground, but American power would not be wielded. It was military action that they could endorse without opening a dissonance in their worldview. Even Prendergast, one of the most hawkish Darfur activists (and one of the smartest), endorses the U.N. option in his book as the solution that makes the most sense. To be fair, he has also suggested elsewhere that the United States should keep other military options on the table; but this latter position certainly places him outside the mainstream of the Darfur activist community.

At least one shortcoming of the Save Darfur movement cannot really be blamed on the movement's members. While its existence has undoubtedly helped to focus the attention of politicians on Darfur, it may also, in a bizarre way, have provided an excuse for these same politicians to avoid the fundamental responsibility that leadership entails. There is no better example than the introduction to Cheadle and Prendergast's book, which was written by Senators Barack Obama and Sam Brownback. "So what does it take to stop genocide?" they write. "What does it take to make the world listen and respond? It takes a number of important tools, including diplomacy, financial resources, and effective security forces. And in a world where these resources are finite, it often takes pressure—pressure from ordinary individuals standing together for an extraordinary cause—to mobilize these resources. In short, it takes you." Get it? Obama and Brownback are urging us to urge them to stop the genocide. And Obama repeats this weird formula in the movie version of *The Devil Came on Horseback*, remarking that "we need greater pressure from the American public to tell their senators this is something we are paying attention to, and we want you to prioritize it."

The circular nature of this logic is maddening, especially coming from Obama, who may soon be the most powerful man in the world. Such logic misunderstands the way a representative democracy works. The line that connects people to politicians is not a one-way street. In a democracy, leaders must be responsive to people's views—but people's views are also shaped by their leaders. The failure of leaders to act cannot be explained by the failure of the public to demand, or to demand more loudly, that they act, unless of course the leaders wish to be regarded merely as followers. Politicians have an obligation to do more than urge us to urge them to formulate solutions to problems, particularly when the problem is an emergency that requires swift action. Genocide will not be stopped by an ideas festival, in or out of government.

The Save Darfur movement, with its noble emphasis on the ability of average people to make a difference, has created a somewhat exaggerated sense that ultimate responsibility for preventing genocide lies with voters. In doing so, it may have given some of our leaders an excuse not to lead. This same flawed logic was on display in 2005, during some of the worst days of the genocide, when Congress authorized a National Weekend of Prayer and Reflection for Darfur. There is nothing wrong with praying for Darfur; but when we reach the point where our leaders are asking us to pray for them to act, something has gone very wrong.

VI.

The successes and the failures of the Save Darfur movement offer some clues to the central mystery of the shameful response to the Darfur genocide: how we could have known so much and done so little. But there may be another element in the explanation, and it has to do with the consequences of complexity. The more we learn about Darfur, the more complicated the situation seems. The one-sentence summary of the genocide that we first heard back in 2004—Arab tribes backed by the Sudanese government are trying to exterminate African ones—sounded straightforward enough, morally and strategically. Morally, it read like a simple narrative of victims and oppressors. And strategically, the simple version of the Darfur genocide made it appear to be a problem we could easily handle. While deploying troops to a conflict zone is never a simple matter, surely NATO, with its sophisticated weaponry, was up to the task of stopping men on horses and camels from attacking villages.

But then we started to learn more, and the situation began to seem less and less tractable. At the level of moral analysis, we learned that the killing was a response to a rebellion, and that the rebel groups had committed atrocities themselves. We learned that not all the Arab tribes were persecutors, and that some of the African tribes had been guilty of cruelties. We learned that one of the

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rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement, was led by disgruntled former members of the government—and shared Khartoum's Islamist philosophy. We learned that the Chadian government was allied with the Darfuri rebels, and that the Sudanese government was aligned with Chadian rebels. And since the Chadian government was a nasty dictatorship, didn't this mean the good guys were allied with bad guys and the bad guys were allied with good guys? The closer we looked at Darfur, the more clarity seemed to recede.

It is important to point out that none of this is incorrect; there are plenty of moral complexities in Darfur. But acknowledging this cannot be the end of the discussion. For one thing, the recognition of complexity is not incompatible with the recognition of right and wrong. (We know this from our experience of many other excruciating policy problems, at home and abroad.) Killing innocents and raping women on a mass scale is wrong, even if the historical forces that cause a region to arrive at the moment of madness are tangled and thick. History is always complicated, isn't it? But the study of history must not make it impossible to see the victims and the oppressors clearly, as it did in the early years of American inaction against the genocide in Bosnia, where action seemed to have been rendered impossible, in the eyes of the president and his advisers, by the haunting and inextricable power of "Balkan ghosts." As Fouad Ajami wrote witheringly in these pages in 1994, "You cannot launch an air strike against the fourteenth century."

Too many in Washington have learned just enough about the history of Darfur to be inhibited by Sudanese ghosts. And so they throw up their hands, label the situation "complex," and accuse others of failing to see the shades of gray. In fact, if you spend enough time with the historical and journalistic material on Darfur—that is, if you look at the broad sweep of the conflict rather than trying to cherry-pick the dissonant notes for the purpose of forming an alibi—patterns begin to emerge out of the haze of complexities. One of those incontrovertible patterns concerns the government of Sudan and the rebels. Even when there are no good guys (or, rather, when the only good guys are the civilians caught up in a conflict—that is, the majority of Darfuris), some bad guys are worse than others; and when the difference can be measured in body counts in the hundreds of thousands, the distinction between bad and worse is worth taking seriously.

Consider the entirety of the NIF's record, from starving its own people in southern Sudan in the 1990s, to supporting the Lord's Resistance Army (arguably the most sadistic militia in Africa), to torturing dissidents and journalists, to espousing a mix of Arab supremacism and radical Islamism, to insisting that only 10,000 people have died in Darfur, to obstructing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, to signing off on a policy of systematic rape and murder—consider all this, and it becomes hard to see a moral equivalence between the government and the Darfuri rebels, whatever the rebels' faults. It is telling that the writers who go into Darfur without political preconceptions generally come out enraged not by the rebels but by the government. Steidle and Blaker knew little about Sudan before they went to Darfur on essentially humanitarian missions. The vast majority of the abuses that they witnessed were the work of the government. Occasionally one of the authors will learn of rebels committing an atrocity or hijacking a truck or stealing livestock, but these anecdotes—as essential a part of the historical record as any other true report—never rise even close to the level at which they might be called systematic, let alone genocidal.

While many of the rebel leaders are far from sympathetic characters, it is at least possible to understand the motives of many of the rank-and-file Darfuris who have taken up arms with them. Consider the story of Hejewa Adam, a female soldier interviewed in *Darfur Now*. She recalls that her village, Shatia, was

> a beautiful place with fresh air, orchards, and hills.... I was home cooking when I heard explosions. They hit us. Some kids lost their legs and mothers were separated from children. Boys under five were killed, and the girls were taken away. I remember my friends whose throats were slit in front of my eyes. I lived in my village for 15 years. And now my child is dead. My home is burned down and now I have nothing. The massacre in Shatia humiliated me and convinced me to join the rebel army.

The rebels are clearly part of the problem in Darfur, and they certainly have crimes to answer for. As Julie Flint makes clear in an essay on the rebels in *War in Darfur* (the best-written essay in the book), rebel leaders have frequently failed to exercise adequate control over their soldiers, and the results have been rape, kidnapping, and other abuses. And yet to find a moral equivalence between Hejewa Adam and the Sudanese government is to surrender to ignorance, not to sophistication.

Strategically, of course, the question of complexity in Darfur is a very different story. Establishing security in Darfur would clearly be a complicated task. But how complicated? This is where another pattern emerges from the Darfur literature, and it has to do with the interpretation of the genocide's root causes. Is the genocide primarily an ethnic conflict among the Arabs and the Africans of Darfur? Or is the conflict primarily a dispute between the Sudanese government and the region as a whole—a dispute in which the government has co-opted the services of certain Darfuri groups in order to pursue its overall strategy of clinging to power via terror? Both interpretations contain more than a grain of truth; and both (along with other factors, such as Qaddafi and environmental degradation) are necessary to explain how the path to genocide was paved.

And yet it is important to ask whether one of these elements has played a larger role than the other. After all, if the prime causes of the conflict are ancient ethnic disputes among Darfuris, then it probably is a situation so complex that outsiders would have no chance to solve it. There are too many tribes with too many agendas, too many grievances, too many leaders. But if the Sudanese government is the primary cause of the conflict, that changes things. It does not exactly make the genocide a simple affair, but it does render the complexities somewhat less bewildering, at least from the standpoint of intervention. It means, for one thing, that there is a single entity we can hold largely responsible for unleashing the violence—and whose behavior we might change through threats, coercion, or military power. It also means that if there were some way to insulate Darfur from the nefarious meddling of Khartoum, then some of the violence might start to subside. Again, it does not mean that solving the conflict would be easy. Nor does it guarantee that intervention would end well. But it does suggest that efforts to stop the genocide are not from the outset futile.

If there is anything the Darfur literature makes clear, it is that the prime cause of the genocide is the national government. Not ancient and immovable tribal hatreds among Darfuris, but a particular regime in Khartoum. The historical studies show that while Darfur has seen tribal tension for centuries, these conflicts were nothing like the one that is now taking place. This was partly

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because Darfur's tribes lacked modern weaponry, but it was also because they had systems in place for containing conflicts—protocols that called for negotiations between tribes and for payment of compensation to prevent disputes from escalating out of control. The vast majority of the Darfur scholars and writers seem to hold Khartoum, not the Arabs of Darfur, mainly responsible for initiating the slaughter.

And so do the Darfuris whom they cite. "We haven't any problem with Arabs. We have a problem with the policy of the government. Arabs are being used by the government to fight us," says one man in *Darfur Diaries*. "This is not a wise government who burns villages and kills civilians," says another Darfuri in the same book. "This is not a government that anyone can elect or support. In war, soldiers fight soldiers, but we never heard about soldiers fighting civilians." Writing in *War in Darfur*, Abdul-Jabbar Fadul and Victor Tanner quote a Fur leader saying that "Our problem is not with the Arabs, it is with the government. The government destroyed our area. Even if Arabs did take part, they are just poor people like us. The government is behind it." In the same chapter, a Masalit leader puts it this way: "The government says the problem is tribal. I say the problem is the government." Daoud Hari predicts that "when the government has removed or killed all the traditional non-Arabs, then it will get the traditional Arabs to fight one another so they too will disappear from valuable lands. This is already happening in areas where the removal of non-Arab Africans is nearly complete." Later in the book, he and Nicholas D. Kristof of *The New York Times* interview a Janjaweed fighter, about fourteen years old, who has been captured after participating in a failed attack on a non-Arab village. Why, they ask, did the Janjaweed attack? "We are from a village just over there," the boy responds. "We have always been friends with the people of this village." Then he explains what changed: "We were told by the government soldiers that these people were going to attack our village and kill our families if we did not attack them first. They would give us money if we did this."

In other words, government officials were the ones pulling the strings. Indeed, many Darfuris seem to hold Omar Bashir personally responsible for the violence. "After the English left, we were still okay, but at Bashir's time they came and separated Arab people and black people," says the sheik of Shegeg Karo in *Darfur Diaries*. In *Heart of Darfur*, Blaker and a colleague speak with a Darfuri woman who has been chased out of her village. "She wants us to write this down," the colleague translates. "She says that Bashir has thrown us into this fire and we are all dying." In *Darfur Diaries*, one refugee who has fled to Chad says that she and her husband, who is still in Darfur, "are separated by Omar Bashir."

To be sure, many observers believe that the conflict has grown far more labyrinthine in the past year or two, as Khartoum has lost control over the carnage that it initiated. The violence between tribes has acquired a momentum of its own, while the rebels have split into myriad different factions. Some rebels have declared allegiance to the government, then turned their guns on other rebels. All this is, first and foremost, an argument for why we should have intervened earlier. Had we sent troops in 2004 or even 2005, we would have encountered a much more tractable war than the one we face today—and hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved. But it is also a cautionary note about the situation that awaits us in Darfur should we decide to intervene now.

Still, the fact that non-Arab Darfuris ultimately blame Khartoum for the genocide more than they blame their Arab neighbors must count as a sliver of hope for the region's future. It suggests, among other things, that if an intervention force could ever establish a modicum of peace in Darfur, such a peace might stand a reasonable chance of taking hold. For their part, not all Arabs in Darfur participated in the slaughter, and many are disgusted by what they have seen—so disgusted that, in 2006, Arab Darfuris actually launched a rebel group to oppose the government themselves. "It denounced the Janjawiid as 'a minority of mercenaries and hired individuals,'" Flint explains, "and pledged to fight the 'injustice' of Khartoum and the 'terrorizing' of civilians."

So the role of complexity in Darfur is, well, complicated. While some complexities undoubtedly make the genocide more difficult to stop, others might mitigate in favor of intervention. And some complexities are, upon close examination, less complex than they seem. What we can say for certain is that invoking "complexity" in order to dismiss the possibility of armed intervention has played right into the hands of the Sudanese government, which wanted the world to view Darfur as a hopelessly elaborate tribal conflict, and not as the campaign of government-orchestrated mass murder that it is. Reeves cites the following statement from 2005 by Robert Zoellick, who by that time had become Bush's point man on Darfur: "It's a tribal war. And frankly I don't think foreign forces want to get in the middle of a tribal war of Sudanese." The ghosts, again. If Omar Bashir knew of Zoellick's comment, then he would also have known that he would win in Darfur. And he has won.

When the definitive book about Darfur is someday written, I suspect it will treat the genocide as something that was both old and new. The story of Darfur is old in the context of Sudan, where similar mass atrocities unfolded in the south during the 1990s; old in the context of Africa, where Rwanda famously exploded in violence in 1994; and old in the context of the world—which, after a century filled with genocides, has yet to figure out how to answer the question posed by a displaced man early in the movie *Darfur Now*: "One by one, they are killing us like dogs. Where do you go to complain?"

Yet while genocide is an old phenomenon, our experience of the Darfur genocide has been in one way novel. Never before have we observed a genocide so diligently. We educated ourselves about the suffering. We watched movies, read books, and wore bracelets. Our politicians attended peace conferences, issued ultimatums, even dispatched an international force. And yet none of it has stopped the killing. What has gone wrong? Did we, over time, grow immune to the images and the testimonies? Did we give too much weight to what seemed like the conflict's complexities, and too little to the raw human suffering that was taking place before our eyes? Did we put too much faith in the United Nations and too little in ourselves? Did we allow our elected leaders to deflect responsibility back onto us—to seduce us with airy statements congratulating us on our passion, when they should have been consulting with generals about how to get soldiers onto the ground as quickly as possible? True, we were poorly served by a small-minded president and his bungling administration. But did liberals demand the right things of him? Did we push for what would really save the people of Darfur? Or did we get trapped by the inclinations of our worldview, and advocate for too little?

But it is too soon to succumb to a retrospective spirit, and to busy ourselves only with learning the right lessons for the next genocide, which will surely come. The suffering in Darfur is not yet yesterday's news. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Scratches

Once upon a time, before the panicked society-wide attempt to expel contingency from American life, existence was organized, or left sufficiently unorganized, for the refreshments of serendipity. The domination of the days and the years by logistics had not yet gone from authoritarian to totalitarian: interventions of experience, and island paradises of idle time, still got through. There were walks, and on those walks, finds. On a snowy afternoon a few years ago, for example, I stopped in a record store (more evidence of the antiquity of my tale) and discovered—but first I must introduce a distinction, to clarify my complaint. It is the distinction between searching and browsing. On that lucky day I was not searching, I was browsing. They are antithetical activities in their pace, in their range, and in their yield. The one is curious and the other is efficient. Anyway, what I found while I was loafing in the record store in Dupont Circle was the compact disc of one of Dizzy Gillespie's most exquisite records, called *Portrait of Jenny*, from 1970. I had feared that it had not survived the war on vinyl, but some *fratelli* in Florence finally made the transfer. And my thrill did not end with its acquisition. I put the CD on and at the very beginning, just as the trumpet first stated its simmering theme, I heard a sound that excited me even more. I heard a scratch! I mean on the record, not on the CD. And then another scratch, and then another. And the sounds of the scratches were beautiful to me. They were the traces of human use, of human ardor. They restored me to the liberal age that preceded the frigid perfectionism of the new technologies of reproduction. The more you listened to a record, and studied it, and deployed it as a soundtrack for intimacy or interiority, the more scars it bore, and they were the scars of true feeling. You listened past them, the way you listened past the muffled panting of a Russian pianist or the clinking of glasses on a far table in Birdland. I know that CDs also get scratched, but their flaws have no significance: they are only interferences with a silvery promise of pristinity. A scratched disc is worthless, but a scratched record is a madeleine. After all, it was you who scratched it—when you dropped the needle, perhaps, because you were distracted by the distraction for which you chose it. Now the scratch's song is an abraded elegy for all the surprise—and all the risk, which is surprise's disagreeable twin—against which we believe, and not altogether falsely, that we have, with the assistance of the gadgetries of connectedness, secured ourselves. One's preparedness for adversity is determined in large measure by one's expectations of the world. There is nothing more disabling than an illusion of control. Disappointment is not a system failure, but an essential element of this system that is not a system. And there is no such thing as stoicism 2.0.

I no longer count myself among the despisers of nostalgia. Often it is disparaged as facile sentiment, as ornate self-pity, as memory's kitsch; and it began its career as the name for a disease—specifically, for the homesickness that soldiers experience abroad. The pathological yearning for return was soon extended from soldiers to sailors (its nautical version was called calenture), and then to exiles, and then, most achingly, to the end of childhood. The problem with nostalgia, of course, is that it shrinks and it blinds. It hollows the fields of interest and desire. The Swiss doctor who identified nostalgia in 1688 observed that "the nostalgic is affected by but few external objects, and nothing surpasses the impression which the desire to return makes on them; while in a normal state the soul can be equally interested in all objects, in nostalgia its attention is diminished." There is indeed a sense in which single-mindedness is a mutilation of consciousness, a betrayal of the variousness of mental life that is required for the plurality of realms that we inhabit. In his scorn for the present, the nostalgist misses too much. He is rapt and poor. And the imagination of reversal that attends nostalgia, the dream of a restoration, can be damaging and dangerous. The pain of displacement breeds the hope of perfect placement. But childhood cannot be an adult's ideal. I come from a tradition that cultivates nostalgia, yet I am quite certain that the re-building of the Temple in Jerusalem would not fulfill my religion, but ruin it. And yet nostalgia, or so I am beginning to understand, is not only an escape. If it may represent a collapse of critical thinking about the past, it may also represent a birth of critical thinking about the present. One method for exposing the inadequacies of the present is to hold it up against the past. (And against the future, which is of course much less constraining. The future is never inadequate, is it?) And in the event that the present should be found lacking in comparison to the past, this is not nostalgia. It is critique. A longing may contain an analysis. In a society whose watchword is "new and improved," new and unimproved is a heresy. But the religion of my homeless ancestors really was richer and deeper than the religion of my housed contemporaries. And I do not see that American life will be improved by the absence from it of second-hand bookstores, or large movie screens, or patience in journalism, or privacy. The view that everything is changing for the better is marketing propaganda—Google progressivism.

"It seems, just now, / To be happening so very fast," wrote Larkin in a great lamentation called "Going, Going." What was happening was the demise of his England, the unmetropolitan anti-modern one. Threnodies are less affecting when their objects are not attractive; but the melancholy of the ugly old grump lives past Hull. This was proven to me recently when I watched a video of Larry McMurtry reading this same poem, at the conclusion of a dolorous account of the book trade in America, as he accepted the Los Angeles Public Library Literary Award; and as my friend read it, he, the toughest bookman in America, almost wept.

> Most things are never meant.
> This won't be, most likely; but greeds
> And garbage are too thick-strewn
> To be swept up now, or invent
> Excuses that make them all needs.
> I just think it will happen, soon.

Leon Wieseltier

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Racism in the Islamic World

How can peace prevail in the Middle East in the face of Islamic bigotry and hate? When will moderate Muslims speak out?

For years, the U.N., led by Islamic and Arab nations and their sympathizers, has accused Israel of racism, but the world consistently turns a blind eye to open, seething anti-Semitism in Islamic society.

What are the facts?

In one of the most astonishing propaganda coups ever, a United Nations conference on racism, which took place in Durban South Africa, declared that Zionism is racism. No wonder the U.S. and Israel walked out of the meeting, which was dominated by representatives of Islamic and Arab states and other anti-Israel forces, and whose conclusions were predictable from the outset.

The supreme irony of this conference was that it accused no other nation of racism—only Israel. In truth, Israel is perhaps the most racially and ethnically diverse and tolerant country in the world. More than half of Israel's Jewish population consists of people of color—blacks from Ethiopia and Yemen, as well as brown-skinned people from Morocco, Iran, Syria, Egypt and Israel itself. In addition, Israel's population includes more than one million Arabs, who enjoy the same civil rights as Jewish Israelis. In Israel hate speech is banned, and it is against the law to discriminate based on race or religion.

> "Until Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force."

In contrast, anti-Semitism—a poisonous form of racism directed specifically against the Jewish people—is rampant in most all Islamic societies. Not only is anti-Semitism commonplace in Muslim nations, but it is propagated shamelessly by their leaders, in state-sponsored media, and by Muslim clergy.

For example, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed declared in a speech to the Organization of Islamic Conference that, "today Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." Imagine if an American president had made a similarly sweeping and bigoted statement about blacks, Latinos or any other race—what a justifiable uproar, perhaps even an impeachment, would ensue. Yet there was no condemnation by the Muslim world of Mr. Mohamed's comments. Rather, virtually all of the conference's Muslim leaders actually voiced their approval.

In response to a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in May 2004, Crown Prince Abdullah declared that "Zionism is behind [these] terrorist actions in the kingdom." (Zionism is the code word often used by Islamic anti-Semites for Jews.) Tom Lantos, the late U.S. Congressman, called the Prince's assertion "an outrage . . . blatant hypocrisy," but Islamic leaders were silent. In fact, millions of Muslims still insist that Zionists were behind the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Anti-Semitism is expressed so freely and ubiquitously in most Islamic societies that no citizen can escape it. During Ramadan in 2002, Egypt's state-controlled TV aired "Horseman Without a Horse," a program based on the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* in which Jews allegedly use the blood of non-Jews to make Passover matzot. In Iran, a TV series, "Zahra's Blue Eyes," portrays "Zionists" kidnapping Palestinian children and harvesting their organs.

Perhaps nowhere is the hatred of Jews more virulent than among the Palestinians. Most perniciously, Palestinian children are taught in school that Jews are descended from apes and pigs and that the most noble thing they can do is to kill Jews. Muslim clerics like Imam Ibrahim Madiras, an employee of the Palestinian Authority, declared in a television sermon, "Jews are a cancer" and later that, "Muslims will kill the Jews . . . [and] rejoice in Allah's victory." No surprise, then, that the 1982 doctoral dissertation of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas makes the astounding claim that "Zionists" collaborated with the Nazis to annihilate the Jewish people in order to drive the survivors to Palestine.

Anti-Semitism and the prospects for peace. Islamic anti-Semitism permeates the Arab Middle East and creates an atmosphere in which Jews are reviled and represented as subhuman. How can the Palestinian people embrace peace with a people represented by their religious and political leaders as dehumanized, evil beings? Even more importantly, how can Israel be expected to trust a so-called peace partner who expresses abject hatred and murderous intent toward Jews on a daily basis? Yet the U.S. and many European nations continue to demand that Israel make one-sided sacrifices for peace with a people steeped in racism and committed to its destruction.

Until Islamic leaders muster the integrity to relentlessly condemn anti-Semitism (and its evil twin, anti-Zionism), we can't expect Israel to accept a forced peace with the Palestinians. Likewise, until moderate Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force among the world's people.

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